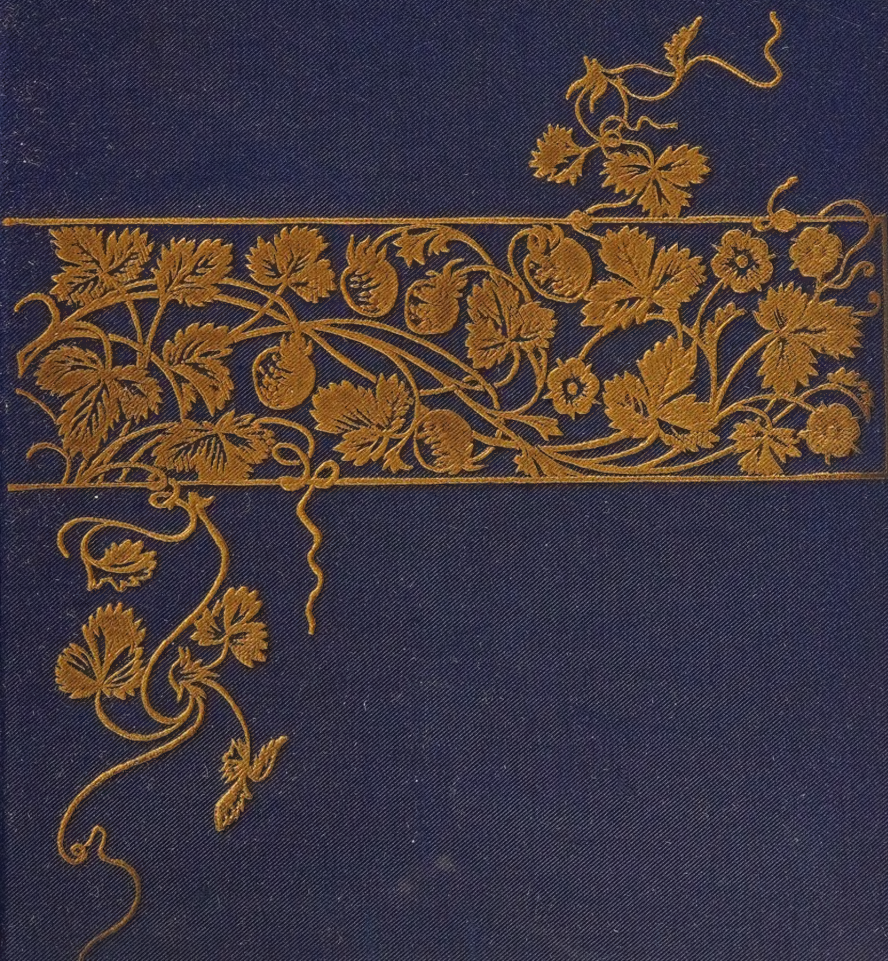


BROUGHTON
A NOVEL
By A.S. ARNOLD



D. Westlake

BROUGHTON.



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BROUGHTON.

A Novel.

BY

A. S. ARNOLD,

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF THOMAS CARLYLE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BROUGHTON.

CHAPTER I.

GERRIE could not forget Sister Grey. She dreaded, however, making that visit alone. The place was so isolated, and she had heard weird stories of ghosts and murders near the "Four Lane Ends." And yet she dared not tell Jessie anything, because she had promised Sister Grey to keep her secret. To Gerrie, a promise was always binding, even a promise made to herself alone.

It was more difficult now to find herself at liberty to take a solitary walk. Miss Jewel was so much at the Hall, was, indeed, becoming much attached to the place and its inhabitants. Vernon now was more obedient to her than to his father, who never had tackled him so deliberately as she had done, and so completely mastered him.

When the parish work was all organised Gerrie would have less time to herself still, so one bright June morning, while Jessie was teaching Vernon, Gerrie told her friend she was going out and should not be back till lunch. It was only ten by the old church clock, as she passed through the Hall gates. Mrs. Earnshaw, as usual, was standing at the door of her shop on the look out for customers. Gerrie felt that intuitively, so stopped to purchase some acid drops, and say a few pleasant words to the good woman, who, every year, seemed to grow redder, and fatter, and more and more lively.

There never was a nicer young lady than Miss Gerrie, thought Mrs. Earnshaw; it was a pleasure to serve her!

Then Gerrie hurried past many other cottages, feeling conscious that she was on an errand that, perhaps, she had better not have contemplated. The road was very clean and white in the early sunshine, and more than one half-naked little urchin she saw inside the pretty gardens, all bedecked with bright flowers—children waiting to be washed, and enjoying the bright

weather, laughing at the butterflies, and longing to escape by the garden gate and chase them down the road. She reached the turnpike; and, in some astonishment, old Badger bid her good morning. Oh, how she hoped no one would see her from the Lodge! What would they think? She hurried faster, feeling very hot and flurried. However, she passed the Lodge gates safely and unobserved; she was thankful for that mercy. In some things Gerrie was very nervous. After passing the Lodge she had to go down a steep decline, where there was not a human habitation in sight. She looked furtively from side to side, fearful lest she should see a man in the hedge; such an apparition would almost make her faint. Bravely she marched along. Just at the foot of the hill, where the four lanes meet, she observed an old woman, who had a large bunch of rhubarb under her arm. Gerrie was very glad to see a woman, and felt herself at once under protection. The old dame marched on, however, up the very lane to which Sister Grey had directed her, and Gerrie followed. They came to a knot of large trees. The old woman turned up a narrow path

behind these trees, and entered an old orchard—a very old orchard—in which there was a well, over which was a slab stone, supported by other stones, and under which, on a strong iron roller, hung a bucket. Gerrie stopped to look at this well. It had a very capacious opening, quite wide enough for a human body. Involuntarily she shivered, and then passed onwards to a cottage which, apparently, had no windows or door. These necessary conveniences she found at the back. A few fowls were picking up crumbs that a remarkably silly-looking woman of about forty was throwing about. This poor creature turned round and gazed vacantly at Gerrie, grinning from ear to ear. She had a peculiar face, but there was nothing repellent in it.

“Good morning!” exclaimed Gerrie, “does Mrs. Rawson live here?”

“Ye—i—t’ house,” said the imbecile.

Gerrie knocked at the black-painted door, and the old woman, minus the rhubarb, stood before her.

“Good morning, miss,” said she, looking very inquiringly.

She was a short, thin, square-shouldered woman, with a broad, low brow, a high, decided nose, high cheek-bones, and a peculiar expression of kindness, almost amounting to benevolence, combined with an unmistakable mixture of dogged determination. Gerrie always read characters by the first steady look at an individual face, and at once liked or disliked a person. Through life she trusted to this; instinct it may be called, because she never found it fail. They might become modified, but she invariably was forced to return to first impressions.

She liked Mrs. Rawson, but felt that she had traits she should fear under certain circumstances.

"I have called respecting Sister Grey, who told me that you would receive letters from me to her, or from her to me. I want to know how she is very much."

"She is as well, miss, as any one can be with a broken heart, and she has found another place. She don't write much."

"Why is her heart broken?" asked Gerrie, grieved and surprised.

"If she has not told you, miss, I won't."

"I know there was some secret sorrow, but I don't know what."

"Perhaps best you shouldn't. But if you have any news to tell her, bring me a letter and I will send it on."

Here the unfortunate younger woman entered the cottage and exclaimed:

"Ole I'ac bin. See there!" (Old Isaac has been.) And going to the tumbledown mantelshelf, brought out a letter from behind a black-leaded ornament.

"Come in, miss. Here is a letter from Catherine. Sit down, please."

The cottage consisted of two rooms only. The house place in which Gerrie found herself smelt strongly of tobacco; the flagstoned floor was evidently of great age, many of the stones were broken, all of them uneven. In one corner of the room was a four-posted bed, tidily made up with a valance of blue-checked gingham round it, and the same material stretched over the top; it had on a many-coloured patchwork quilt. The small, square, diamond-paned windows were filled with

flowerpots, and a sweet-scented musk in vain tried to overpower the fumes of tobacco-smoke. The hearth was clean. Both women were decent, and Gerrie sat down as much at home as in her own more beautiful surroundings. She was eager to see the letter the old woman was evidently perusing with difficulty under her spectacles. But she was not to have her curiosity gratified. Mrs. Rawson folded it up carefully and deposited it in her pocket.

"Are you Miss Geraldine Hoxton?" she inquired, fixing her keen eyes on the young girl's face.

"Yes; I ought to have told you."

"Well, miss, Sister Grey bids me tell you to write to her, and tell her all about the young gentleman, the Squire, and yourself. She says any bit of news will cheer her. Seven years was a long time to have served you, and to have such an ending. It was very hard on her."

"Have you pen and paper?" asked Gerrie. "I will write now. It is very difficult for me to come here alone, as I promised not to tell anybody about it."

"So it is; but there's note to fear. Pattie Atkins might bring a letter, I should think; but, stop, I will ask Kate first."

"Kate," Mrs. Rawson spoke very familiarly of Sister Grey too. "Are you—are you any relation to Catherine Grey?"

"Note to speak on, miss, note to speak on," and the old woman began to stir in search of pen and ink; having found them, she made a place on the round deal table and invited her guest to write her letter.

Gerrie had scarcely begun when she heard a man's heavy step on the stones outside. Old Mrs. Rawson hurried to the door, and quickly sent him about his business. Gerrie could see her gesticulating about frantically. This disturbed her so much that she could hardly write. However, she managed to say she was glad to hear of Sister Grey being comfortably settled, and that she had accomplished a secret journey to Mrs. Rawson; but everything seemed full of mystery. Vernon was behaving much better as Miss Jewel taught him now, and managed him better than anybody else. That she, Gerrie, was very happy;

but often thought about Sister Grey, and was sad when she thought of her secret sorrows. She then promised to write from time to time, and begged for a letter. And after entreating that Pattie Atkins might be a means of communication between her and that lonely cottage, wound up her short epistle. The old woman held it to the fire to dry, having no blotting-paper in her possession.

Gerrie then said she must hurry home. Looking at her beautiful little watch, which had formerly been her mother's, she found it was turned half-past eleven. But the sky was cloudless, and at such an hour surely there was nothing to fear, even if she were alone. Why, these poor women must be constantly by themselves in their cottage home, up the narrow lanes, or on the wide, open turnpike.

"Shall we go a bit of t' way with you, Miss Gerrie?" asked Mrs. Rawson. "But I'm tired mysen wi' going to t' garden for a bit of rhubarb. Sally will go."

"No, thank you. I shall soon get home, I am not at all afraid," said Gerrie, feeling that if

she were nervous, nervousness was not fear, real tangible fear.

So off she set, putting up her parasol to shield her from the sun, but glancing under it for the sight of some man she knew she had heard in the neighbourhood. There was nothing to be seen of human being; and she walked sharply down the lane, at the foot of which were two large hay waggons, harnessed to a pair of fine cart horses, pausing ere they ascended the tremendous hill opposite the one Gerrie had to climb into Broughton. There was nothing to fear in that. One of the drivers touched his hat to her, as if he knew her. Gerrie dared not return the salute. When she turned the corner and gazed up the long, silent road, again her heart beat quicker.

She had not gone many yards when she saw a man with a slouched hat, and a very dazzling-coloured slop, crouching in the bottom of a huge hedge. She was now absolutely terrified, and quickly crossed to the other side of the road, and toiled upwards, hot and out of breath. She dared not look behind, not a soul was to be seen in

front. She fancied she heard stealthy steps behind her. They seemed to gain upon her. Oh, what should she do? What should she do?

Suddenly a strong arm was clasped round her from behind, pinioning her arms as if in a vice. She screamed, but there was no one to hear. Then she felt a deadly faintness creeping over her. Her silent assailant was behind; she could see nothing of him but the arm, which was covered with the bright slop, by that she knew it was the man she had seen in the hedge.

"Hand me your purse and watch," said a gruff voice. "I want note else."

"I can't if you don't let me go," she replied, recovering herself.

He immediately loosened one arm, and she quickly gave him her purse, which contained only a few shillings.

"Don't take my watch," she implored, "it was poor mamma's."

"Hand it over!" was the only answer.

And she felt compelled to do so, or feared for her life.

He took care all this time to keep himself out of sight, but as soon as he had it in his possession, he extricated her, and quickly turning her head that she might recognise the thief, she fancied she had seen that man before ; but her partial recognition enforced silence more peremptorily than ever.

Oh, if she were right in her surmise. What did it all mean ? And now, what was she to do ? How conceal her loss of that beloved and valuable watch ? Her purse was of no account whatever ; but her mother's watch !

She could and would write to Sister Grey about it. More it was impossible for her to do.

She tried to continue her way up the hill, but found her strength miserably failing her. She must sit down or fall. What if that man were within sight ? At last she was compelled to sit down. She took off her glove and felt for a ditch she knew sometimes contained water just under the hedge. How thankful she felt. There it was, and she moistened her forehead and lips with the refreshing stream. She could hear its pleasant

trickling as it hurried downwards over the pebbles, or any other obstruction it met on its path. She watched a lark rise behind the hedge, and listened to its song till it died away in the distance, as it soared upwards. And then she heard the sound of wheels, and saw a high dog-cart coming quickly from the vale. Its speed slackened. The driver got down to lighten the burden up that steep incline.

Gerrie made an effort, and rose to her feet. It was Dr. Butt, the dearest of doctors, as she often called him.

"Why, Miss Gerrie!" he exclaimed. "What an apparition! You appear literally to have risen out of the earth, as white as a lily."

"It was so very hot," said poor Gerrie, blushing, and then turning paler than ever.

"Come," said the doctor, "let me lift you into my dog-cart. Never mind the mount; it is rather high, I grant you; but we will manage."

In a moment she was in his strong arms, and placed on the topmost step, so that she could easily find a seat. He then bade her sit still

till they reached the top, and hold on to the side of the conveyance. She found no difficulty in doing this ; clinging fast, she smiled down sweetly upon his upturned face, feeling unutterable gratitude to be under his protection. He soon mounted by her side, but still continued to drive slowly.

“You should not wander so far from home alone, dear child,” he said. “You appeared to me as if you had experienced a fright. Did you meet some terrible object?”

“Oh, please don’t say anything about it, dear doctor ! I am such a silly goose, and would rather not tell.”

The doctor was puzzled ; but gave the promise to be silent on the subject.

Here the horse broke into a rapid pace, and talking became difficult, to Gerrie’s intense relief. The doctor insisted upon driving her to the Hall gates, and depositing her within their safe shelter. He then clasped her hand, making her promise to take a glass of wine and lie down immediately after, and he knew Gerrie would obey.

He then drove off, but determined to call

in the evening, and ascertain how his pet patient was.

Jessie was just going home, and met her in the porch.

“Why, Gerrie, what a ghost! Has the heat overpowered you, dear? Come, do take some wine.” And she took her hand and led her into the dining-room, where Gerrie drank a glass of port, and then, as directed, went upstairs to lie down.

She still felt terribly agitated. The assault on her person had given her quite a nervous shock. It did not matter how she tried to divert her thoughts; every now and then she would start with the horrible sensation of that bright-coloured, coarse arm clasped round her shoulders, and when she dozed, woke up with an exclamation of terror.

Nurse came in once or twice and heard her mutter. Jessie had gone home to lunch. Nurse called Bolton, who declared something had happened to the child. The doctor must be fetched, and the Squire told that Miss Gerrie was ill.

When Jones heard of Miss Gerrie's indis-

position, he at once laid it to some evil agency. Jones detested his master, but knowing he had a good berth, he was not going to forfeit it for a trifle. Yet Jones had not a valet soul; it was because he knew too much about his master to reverence him. The outward respect he was forced to show did not come from his heart.

“A bad man, that!” was his inward ejaculation.

Jones himself was a godly, God-fearing man; his whole soul obnoxious to vice and immorality. The Squire knew his valet’s opinion concerning himself; he knew that Jones was incapable of being such a one. But the Squire, in his turn, respected Jones, and never commissioned him to do for him what his conscience might not approve.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the Squire had run up to town, and would not return for several days. He had received a telegram, and had hunted everywhere for his daughter; but finding her out, had left a message for her with Miss

Jewel. When Gerrie heard this she was relieved. Perhaps between this and his return from London she might hear something of her watch. The first step to take was to send for Pattie.

Bolton brought her little dainties to tempt her appetite; but now she was consumed with excitement all the more intense because of the violent efforts she made to appear calm. She tasted and sipped, but at last said :

“Nurse, I want to see Pattie very much. I must see her this afternoon. Will you go round and see if she is at home?”

“That I will; and if she isn’t, I’ll fetch her, let her be where she may.”

This assurance comforted Gerrie, and she tried to map out how she would worm all she could out of Pattie. There was more behind the scenes than she first imagined. That man in the slop, who had so brutally waylaid her, she believed to be the very man she had seen in the wood with Pattie. There was something in him that belonged to him alone. It was not he who was Pattie’s lover; of that she was convinced.

How she abominated these mysteries ; and now she was herself playing a secret part, not for her own sake, but for the sake of others, which did not make her rôle any the easier.

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE Pattie appeared, Jessie came quietly into the bedroom where Gerrie lay with the blind partially down. Jessie seemed scarcely herself. She made all kind inquiries, but her mind seemed preoccupied and her manner somewhat perturbed as she gave the Squire's message. He had been summoned to attend what most likely would be the death-bed of his sister, Mrs. Campbell, who lived in one of the long, monotonous streets off Portland Place. Everything had to go on at the Hall precisely as if he were there. He and his sister, who was a wealthy widow, had not been on the best of terms, and the Squire had declared his anxiety to propitiate her, if possible, ere she finally passed over to the great majority. Gerrie understood all about it. Her father never made any secrets with her about his family squabbles,

or about his own blundering business capacities. He seemed in a chronic state of failure in one scheme or another, which did not tend to improve his natural impatience. Sometimes he speculated largely, and invariably attended the races—the Doncaster, Derby, and Epsom. The sporting news came more regularly than the parish magazine. Poor Gerrie's mother had secretly grieved over this; and now the child herself—for she was little else—shared the burden. She did not allude to anything that could possibly tend to her father's discredit to Jessie; it pleased her to find how her friend appreciated his better nature, even as she did—for he had a better nature as well as a worse. Had he married happily, life would have been quite a different existence to him; and he did not hesitate to let Gerrie understand that fact. At any rate, he was free now, and sometimes the imaginative child would picture him bringing to the dear old Hall a rich and beautiful lady to reign over her.

Gerrie was not selfish. "Anything to see poor papa quite happy at last," she would say to herself. It grieved her to see the gray hairs

spreading among his dark locks, and the crow's feet gathering round his blue eyes. He made more of a companion of her than formerly, seemed to care for her more than for his son and heir; and missing his affection so long, she welcomed it doubly when it came.

"You seem dull, dear Jessie," she said, innocently, "do you miss papa, too?"

"It is dull having you laid up," replied Jessie, evasively. "I was hoping for a long walk with you this afternoon, and calling on Mrs. Price about the Band of Hope meetings. It is time we were beginning in earnest."

"What *are* they for? Laura told me it was to make all the children pledge themselves not to touch, taste, nor handle wine or beer. Poor little things! I have just been ordered a glass of wine myself, and feel the benefit of it; but poor children, who have got none if they wanted it ever so much more, are to be persuaded to pledge themselves not to avail themselves of such an opportunity should it come in their way. What does Arthur say about it?"

"Oh, he says we must have an original Band

of Hope, and introduce as little of the drink question as possible. He would not teach the little ones to despise their parents or to pity them if they could help it. And I think he is right. But a Band of Hope we must have, as well as the Temperance Meetings. Papa is applying for a Scripture Reader, too, for his health becomes more and more precarious. He had such a terrible attack this morning. Quite frightened mother. Now, Gerrie, do get up, dear, and get better. I must go now, and see after Vernon."

Jessie disappeared, leaving a gentle kiss on Gerrie's cheek. She did not tell her that the Rector had been greatly objecting to her employment at the Hall, that he had been alluding to the Squire's well-known loose character, that he had been complaining loudly of his self-willed children, and bemoaning his general misfortunes. No, Jessie kept all this to herself. Every heart knoweth its own bitterness, and sometimes sorrows unshared are best for all parties.

About four o'clock, Pattie came in, clean and simply clad, wearing a look of calm indifference

to all things external or spiritual. Pattie was not sufficiently imaginative to be superstitious or foreboding, and even Gerrie's face of curious inquiry failed entirely to rouse her curiosity as to the reason of her summons.

"I've all cleaned up, Miss Gerrie, so I can stop a bit. What's been amiss with yer?"

"I've had a fright, Pattie, such a fright! I shall never get over it."

"Well, I never. Whativer can have scared you so?"

"A dreadful wicked man. Do you know Mrs. Rawson, Pattie?"

Pattie's face went white too—whiter than Gerrie's.

"I know her right enough. She's oft at my grandmother's."

"Do you ever go to her lonely cottage?"

"Well, I have been. I know t' road."

"Oh, you do; then you may go for me next time. I will not go again. Does a man live with Mrs. Rawson?"

"Not as I knows on. But it's no use a

catechising me that cross, Miss Gerrie. It ain't my fault as you've bin scared."

"I'm not cross, dear, with you, nor with Mrs. Rawson; but oh, Pattie, I have lost my watch, my beautiful little watch that was my mother's, and until I find it again I shall never rest. A man took it from me."

"At Mrs. Rawson's, Miss Gerrie?"

"No; but when I was coming up the lane."

"It wer' a tramp, miss, there's lots on 'em about."

"It may have been a tramp, but you know him, you were speaking to him in the wood one day. I am convinced it was the same man."

"No, no, no, Miss Gerrie, no one as I knows on would harm a hair of your head. You're wrong there, I'm certain sure."

"Stoop down, and I will tell you who I think it is. I shall tell by your face if I am right."

But Pattie was obstinate.

"I don't want to know who you think it is, Miss Gerrie. If it is anybody as I knows on, trust to me, you'll get that there watch back

again. If it were but a tramp, of course I can't. You'll believe me, won't you?"

"Yes, I will, so now I must wait till you can find a chance to go that way. When will that be?"

"This very night, Miss Gerrie. Come what may."

"I cannot pretend not to be anxious, but you must take care of yourself too, dear Pattie; much as I value my darling little watch, I love you better. No one knows where I went but you. That makes it still more awkward."

"Miss Gerrie!" exclaimed the girl, "I'll go now, this very minit; mother thinks as how I am here, and so she will be at peace for a while."

Gerrie could offer no objection, and in five minutes' time Pattie was hurrying down the same road that Gerrie had taken that morning, but quite devoid of her nervous fears.

When she reached a lane, leading across some fields behind the Lodge, and skirting the wood, she turned down, leaped the stiles with the agility

of a young fawn, and soon found herself at the cottage.

A man in a bright-coloured slop was eating his dinner or taking his tea complacently enough. He took no notice of the girl, but went on at the business, with which he was engaged, with profound imperturbability. Rachel Rawson, who sat in a clean cap and apron, smoking her long clay pipe contemplatively, exclaimed: "You *are* come early this afternoon."

"Yes, I've summat to say to him, by himsen."

The man looked up inquiringly.

"Tha may well look; but it's true."

He deigned no reply, but drank a long draught of tea out of a capacious pot-cup.

"Can't yo' tell him what yo' have to say a once, wi'out so much ado?" asked the old dame.

"No, he mun come a bit o' t' way back wi' me—and then——"

"All right, my lass. That I can do easy enough."

He was not an ugly man, nor vicious-looking. There was nothing remarkably coarse in his face.

He was tall, with very dark hair and large eyes. His complexion was ruddy, his head of a fine reddish tinge above the dark undergrowth. But there was a perpendicular line in the centre of his forehead that showed intensity of feeling, strong determination, passion—irritability—almost unendurable. It was a face inured to suffering, mental as well as physical; but when a smile crossed his face it was not a bad one—one could imagine some luckless woman thinking it beautiful. Rare, indeed, however, was a smile ever seen to flit across that furrowed countenance.

“You’ll none see *him*, this afternoon,” said the man.

“And don’t want,” was the uncourteous answer. “Where’s Sally?”

“Gone to gather a posy out at t’ back.”

Pattie, as if born to the place, walked into the yard and tried to pump the imbecile as to the proceedings of the man in the interior of the dwelling.

“Where’s *he* bin?” she asked.

“I’ve been a-playing me,” she replied. “Don’t know.”

"Ne'er mind. I'll find out, I guess, somehow. Art ready?" she inquired at the door.

"Aye, lass!" And he reared up his tall figure.

"Good day, Rachel," said Pattie, and the young girl and the rough man quitted the house.

"Not down t' road; I'm not bound to be seed walking out wi' thee," said Pattie. "Let's go i' t' plantation." She led the way and he followed silently.

"Nar then!" she exclaimed, turning round suddenly, "where's that watch? If tha doesn't gie it me, I'll niver speak to thee nor him no more. I don't care a straw for him. I believe he 'tices thee to be worse than thee iver was. Fancy stealing from *her*, from our Miss Gerrie; why, thee deserves prison for that."

"Tha'rt fine and saucy, lass."

"And I'll be summat worse, if thee doesn't gie me t' watch. It wor her mother's as is dead."

"Her mother cared note about her. I niver hurt her, took care not to do that; but I wish I could catch her father. I'd wring his neck, if I swung for it."

"If he catched thee he'd do t' same by thee, I reckon."

"Villain; I'll gie it him yet."

"What's he done to thee!"

"Done! sent me body and soul to t' devil, that's what he's done; and we can owe a man a grudge for that, if he *is* a Squire and lives in a Hall and keeps servants and carriages! Aye, a bigger grudge for a' that. Only let me catch him and he may look out for more than his watch."

"Are you looking out for him?" said Pattie.

"Aw am, lass—night and day!"

"Then I'll warn him, 'cos he's Miss Gerrie's father."

"If yo' do I'll chuck thee down t' well."

"Tha'll have to look sharp to do that; chuck thesen, more like. But here, gie me that watch for Miss Gerrie, and I'll do summat for thee."

"Well, get me its vally. Tha' knows wheer from."

"Gie it me, then."

The man drew it out of his pocket and examined it closely.

"It's a little beauty, worth fifteen guineas or more, and thee must get me so much. Agree, and tha shalt have it."

"I'll ask; can't do no more, and tha can always drive thy own bargains close enough."

"Wait till tha'rt a lady, lass. That face a thine will do it. Why doesn't tha try to talk like Miss Gerrie? As soon as iver tha opens thy mouth, tha lets out th' breed."

"Oh! I'll learn i' good time."

"Gie me a kiss for that bauble," said the man, with a look of real affection or admiration in his eyes.

"I will. I'm really sorry for thee," she answered, giving her pretty mouth to be kissed, and receiving a loud salute with evident pleasure. Moreover, there was a moisture in both their dark eyes, that would have been accounted for with difficulty by any onlookers. They then grasped hands, and Pattie ran homewards—ran till quite out of breath; she reached Eastwood, when she determined to call on Mrs. May for a few minutes, to be able to give some account of her

afternoon's outing, both at the cottage and in the Hall kitchen.

Mrs. May had six children. The poor blind boy sat on the doorstep enjoying the sun, and plaiting string. Two other boys were at school, and the third had gone to work as a clerk. Reuben, the pride and joy of his mother's heart, seemed to have more than his share of the family intelligence, and quite an unusual amount of common-sense. The father was somewhat of an obstinate character; but though he irritated both Reuben and his mother, was a worthy man. Jane May sometimes indulged in wildest dreams of her son's future. He always had an air of authority about him, yet was quiet and unassuming. Surrounded as he was by evil companions, during the best part of each day, no one attempted to lead him astray; they felt they might as easily have moved a rock as Reuben from the path of duty. Revelry, swearing, lying, shirking of work, bad language, or coarse jokes, seemed foreign to his nature, which was as honourable and true as if he were a knight of the Middle Ages, or a Puritan follower of John Knox.

Arthur admired Reuben, and did not feel himself a bit more out of place in unseemly attire than he felt Reuben to be, as they often trudged home together, black enough, but in some unaccountable way less black, and altogether more respectable-looking, than most of their fellows. Arthur thought Reuben capable of greater things, as he meant to do greater things himself. Reuben knew his many disadvantages, and though he might aspire to be leading hand, foreman, or even manager of works, he only hoped to do so by steady hard work. He thought tremendously while toiling at his manual labour—thought of his work, of his position, and of the difference in social status between himself and the young gentleman who called him friend. But he had no ambition to rise on the social ladder. He had a belief that the lowest step might be made quite as good to stand upon as the topmost, because it was only a ladder that must be laid low after all, and one and all find *terra firma*. He would liken social status to that of taking a journey by rail from York to London, first, second, and third-class, London being paved on

one side with golden streets, and her palaces ready for the reception of the travellers; the other worse than Whitechapel with weeping, and wailing, and woe.

And the only necessary item for the journey was to obey orders, attend to the rules, and believe that He who had made them really meant all He said and all He promised. What on earth did it matter what carriage the traveller journeyed in, seeing each and all were subjected to exactly the same conditions, and at the end of the journey would pass the same examination, and receive the same rewards? In the hurry and bustle of taking seats, some might wish they had obtained an easier one; but what folly to waste time in grumbling about it, instead of doing what they could to secure a bright welcome, one condition of which was, that they should one and all love as brethren, be pitiful and courteous, and content with such things as they had. Reuben found himself in the third-class, where were a good many roughs and occasional fellow-travellers far better than he. At every station travellers might change their carriage or their seat, provided they

could honestly pay for them. Reuben had so many to help on the journey, and so many near and dear in the same predicament.

“Unfortunately, those more comfortably situated forget that we are all bound for the same Home,” he said, “where, if we are admitted, we shall be equals. And though I travel third-class, sir, I mean to try and make myself personally on an equality with those in a more comfortable compartment. The more the merrier, and we have at any rate the advantage of numbers, and I mean to stick to the third-class, and see if I cannot make my companions a little more comfortable. There is no real need for us to be distinguished from other passengers of the journey, for we are by no means limited in our capacities. We have no need to wear the badge of coarseness, vulgarity, ignorance, or discourtesy, if we could only make our companions aware of that fact. We can surely do for each other what absolutely costs us nothing. The fact is, it is our ill manners, our discourtesy to each other, that stamps us as low people, worse than anything. Foreign workmen are as polite again. How is it, Mr. Arthur? Help us to be

gentlemanly, as God Almighty intended we should be, for there is nothing like Bible maxims to make us so."

"It would be no easy job to make some of you fellows gentlemen," replied Arthur, laughing; "but in most there are all the possibilities, and they should be made the most of. *You* will do more by your own example than *I* could. For they take it as a matter of course to see me well-spoken, correct in dialect, and polite. Of course they would think me a brute if I were not; but then, they think these things belong to a gentleman, and not to those of a lower social status, and I believe our forefathers are to blame for this. We English are, and always have been, too exclusive, too tenacious of holding our own in every particular, even in the manner of holding our knife and fork; and in the education we now are advocating for all classes, the upper classes will take care that even, in its most elementary form, it shall be quite different to that of their own children."

"It is a crying shame," exclaimed Reuben.

"It belongs to our insular idiosyncrasies; but

now that we jostle about so much among all nations, we must gradually widen our sympathies, and have broader, really more Christian views. English pride is scarcely inferior to that of the Hindoos or Brahmins. Such class distinctions are by no means a Christian institution in my opinion. Fortunately, perhaps, not many of you trouble yourselves with such questions. It is all—*Laissez faire.*”

Now Reuben's mother had a mortal dread of her son getting married, and having a family to toil for. He had more to do now than he ought to have, and found it weary work, when his arduous day's labours had ended, to begin book-learning. But her ambition for him far exceeded his own. She dreaded Pattie Atkins' beautiful face. She was sensitive herself to beauty, and wondered how any man could look on such a face without admiring it. Reuben was often very silent and far away in thought. Was he in love with this girl who now stood in that humble dwelling, like a picture out of a frame, her generally pale cheeks glowing with her run, her wondrous eyes lit up with smiles?

for she was delighted with the success of her errand, and Gerrie's lovely watch was wrapped up tightly in her rough little hand.

"What have you got?" said Mrs. May.

"Nothing much," returned Pattie; "I thought I would just look in to tell Bolton how you were all getting on. Ben looks well. What's he doing with that string?"

Pattie spoke better to every one than to her own relatives.

"We are going to have him taught basket-making, and he is practising plaiting."

"Well, I never! Will he be able to earn a living?"

Ben was a sharp lad and heard her.

"Aye! better nor you," he cried out.

"It ain't much as I earns," answered Pattie.

"Why don't you go out to sarvice, I can't think—a fine, strong lass as you're growing?" said Mrs. May, quite anxious to get her as far as possible.

"I can't do enough for our little hut, anyhow," answered the girl. "My step-mother's allays a carrying on."

“Well, but then, she is but a step-mother; you might suit some one else better. But I hears queer tales of thee stopping out all nights, more than once.”

“Hold yer noise, Mrs. May. Folks are allays jabbering.”

“I hope it isn’t true,” answered the good woman. “How old are you, Pattie?”

“Turned seventeen. But who telled you, Mrs. May, and where did they say I was? Because it ain’t true.”

“Nobbody knows as I can hear tell.”

“You’re right there. It wasn’t my fault that I wasn’t at our house, and I shall never hear the end on it. It’s hard on me, but I must bear it.”

And a look of settled determination rested on that fair face, a face that never assumed an expression that did not come from the heart, and because that young heart was so seldom stirred, that lovely countenance often appeared expressionless.

Over the mantelpiece hung several glass

photographs, in small gilt frames. Pattie began to examine them closely.

"Why, this is your Reuben! He looks as grave as a parson, and a'most as trim. Who's this lad?"

"That was Reuben's young uncle Frank, him as was burnt. Our Reuben was but three years old when it happened; but I think he's been grave ever sin."

"It was awfu'. I've heard Bolton talk on it. Miss Gerrie never could listen to that tale. Is his mother alive yet?"

"Yes; but she's breaking fast now, for she's a great age. It ain't easy for strong folks to die, not even when the heart's broke. She's ne'er got over that."

"Poor old lass!" said Pattie, and looking wistfully at Mrs. May, as if for motherly comfort, she added:

"You arn't a-going to turn against me, are you?"

"Nay, lass! I ne'er go by hearsay. I'm none again you, but be warned by me. Wi' that face,

dangers stare you i' t' face on all sides. Take care of thysen, Pattie, and remember your dead mother; a better woman never walked in shoe-leather."

CHAPTER III.

GERRIE'S delight and gratitude to Pattie when her watch was restored to her, knew no bounds. She actually kissed the girl in her excitement.

But Pattie was unusually sad and sorrowful.

"Remember your dead mother." These words rung in her ears. Oh that her mother were but alive! She could have told her all that now preyed on her mind. As it was, she was obliged to bear her own burden. She dared not tell Reuben May's mother what oppressed her, nor could she tell Bolton, or nurse; and as for Miss Gerrie, it would be worse than useless to expect wise counsel from such a young lady, besides the shame of worrying her. But Pattie's pretty face was full of anxiety, and Gerrie remarked upon it.

"It's no use telling anybody, Miss Gerrie. Poor folks like us gets old afore we're young."

"I will not tease you with my questions," said Gerrie; "but now tell me, Pattie, how you got this treasure back for me."

"Nay, Miss Gerrie, you mont akse no questions, please, because I'm bound not to answer 'em. I telled yer I'd get it back, and I've kept my word."

"So you have, and now, if you say nothing, I shall tell no one, then nobody need be any the wiser for my morning's adventure. You are a faithful friend to me, Pattie, I do believe."

"Ain't yer bin my friend ever sin' you were a baby a'most, and my mother's too, Miss Gerrie?"

"And yet you don't trust me," said Gerrie, reproachfully.

"I dursn't," replied the girl, almost sullenly.

Gerrie understood more than Pattie imagined, but she thought it wisest to be silent. So she gave her hand to Pattie, who hurried home; but before she reached her own door, Jacob met her.

"How's Miss Gerrie? What's the matter with her? Bolton says she has had a fright. Tell me, Pattie."

“Well, you’re softer than I took yer for. You must write some verses on it and send ’em to t’ *Times*. Miss Gerrie’s as right as a trivet now, laughing all over her face, I’ll back.”

“Pattie, I’d kill any one as hurt Miss Gerrie.”

“You needn’t tell me, I can see for mysen.”

Jacob’s face was set and white; he stood against the farm-yard gate, so as to prevent Pattie’s passing through. It was evening. Milking time was over. The cows were safely housed in their stalls, the fowls had gone to roost. There was a general air of calm repose about the place, while the atmosphere was pervaded with the delicious odour of new-mown hay. Brother and sister had their own thoughts; but Jacob knew better how to put his into expression, and his emotions were deeper and less controlled.

“Oh, Pattie, lass, how I hunger for a sight of her face; thine is pretty enough, but it’s nothing where Miss Gerrie’s comes. When she smiles at one it’s wonderful.”

“Some one else ’ll hear thee, if tha don’t

mind, and father would be mad. Whativer you do, don't talk here. Let me pass."

"Mr. Arthur begged me to bring you to t' church to-night. He says your voice is a good treble lead for the girls."

"You must akse father. He'll sure enough say nay."

"I will. I wish you'd try to talk better."

"Like I know who—you mean, well, I ain't a going to try, shamming to be gentlefolks, it's as bad as taking 'em off."

"You've just as much right to talk your best as t' Queen. You should hear Mr. Arthur talk about that."

"Oh, he! He's like nobbody else. Besides, I can't think of ivery word as comes out of *my* mouth. I'd as lief not talk at all," said common Pattie; "tha fair turns me sick when tha takes off Mr. Arthur. It ain't a bit of use a trying to do as such folks do."

"I say it *is* use trying, and if iverybody tried we should soon do away with country dialects, and all as one people speak the same language."

"Lor! gie o'er. How you do carry on! It's

all Mr. Arthur as puts such notions in yer head, and it's all waste of breath, for *you'll* niver talk as *he* does, nor *me* like Miss Gerrie."

"You won't try."

"No, catch me at it. I ain't made o' soft soap."

Jacob was always annoyed at Pattie's determination to aspire to no lady ways, at least, with him. What was the use of him learning so hard and striving to become a gentleman if all his family remained louts?

Pattie went with Jacob to practice, but never considered her voice the leading one. Old Joe Bannington, though he spoilt the performance, held that post, and had held it with honour for more than twenty years. Then his own good sense made him moderate his lung power, out of consideration for the feeble attempts of his own grandchildren, "Bless their little hearts." He liked to hear them, though their voices were only like water dropping.

It was quite remarkable how little offence Arthur and Jessie were giving by their new inventions. How bright and happy *he* looked

that night. His face wore an expression of proud contentment. Was it Gerrie's or Pattie's presence that seemed almost to inspire him? Jessie could not tell, for Arthur was much more reticent with her than Jacob with his sister. Pattie sang well, she knew it, though her voice sadly lacked training. It was true and of great compass; even Joe Bannington deigned to remark that it was as good as a flute. Flattery never seemed to affect Pattie in the least. For her life she could not assume airs. Whatever she possessed in advantage over the other village girls, she accepted as simple facts over which she had no control. Thus she made no enemies by her beauty or her singing. But when rigged out in Miss Gerrie's finery, her love of dress displayed itself, and if she had possessed a watch and necklace, rings and bracelets, she might have boasted of them, and held her head higher. But no one gave her these, and thereby spared her such transgressions.

That night she looked earnestly more than once at Mr. Arthur, as he stood in front of the small gallery at the bottom of the church, keeping time with a short cane. She came to the conclusion

that he was far superior to any parson as ever she had seen, that his face was as bright as an angel's, and his ways as kind and sweet as those of an apostle eighteen hundred years ago.

Arthur felt those eyes were searching into his soul. More than once he met them, and they seemed to him to be pleading for something she would never find words to express. Had she guessed his secret? Did she know that it was chiefly love of her that had widened his love for all her class, that he would gladly not only die for her if called upon so to do, but live for her, anyhow, in peril, in pain, in loneliness, in obscurity, if he could but shelter her from every ill? Could she be guessing that any such thoughts filled his mind, when he had been so guarded in language and manner towards her from his first consciousness of his love for her? He did not wish her to guess his secret. There are thousands of ways in betraying love, none more easily detected than the very means taken for concealment. Arthur had been remarkably wise in his conduct. He had never appeared to seek or to shun her society. He had often spent half an hour at the cottage with

Jacob, lending him books, and helping him in his studies ; but he had never made pretty speeches to Pattie, he had never trifled with her, or drawn her out much, never betrayed the strange emotion he felt when she came in and out, apparently intent on nothing but her housework. And never before had he seen that expression on Pattie's face. It did not settle there. Sometimes there was not a trace of it on her imperturbable countenance, and her eyes would meet his with impenetrable unconcern. What a strange being she was. There was no knowing exactly what passed within that mind ; but this occasional look of tenderness, yet of investigation, puzzled him intensely. Had she been in his own position in life he would not have known what to say or do ; but as she was so poor, so humble, he might just walk home part of the way with the brother and sister, and see if there was anything he could do for either of them. He knew they would both trust him with even pecuniary troubles sooner than any one else ; and it might be something they both shared that caused that inexplicable look in Pattie's eyes.

As they were all leaving the church Arthur walked very slowly, and began talking simply to Pattie about her younger brother, who had been rather obstreperous.

"Don't tell father of him, Mr. Arthur," pleaded Pattie, "mother knocks him about enough."

"Does she ill-treat you, Pattie?" asked Arthur.

"She has done, but she dursn't now."

"Are you quite happy at home, then? Would you like to leave her?"

"I shall be going soon enough, Mr. Arthur. But there's no place like Broughton to me. I couldn't abide bein' away."

"Where are you going?" He could not venture to say more, his voice was so husky.

"To London, maybe. It's a big place, isn't it, sir?"

"Pattie, I won't have you go to London."

Fancy Pattie, with that guileless, beautiful face, a poor, general servant in that great Babylon, reeking with sin and shame. Before she should go to London he would risk earth and heaven.

"Do you hear, Pattie?" He spoke very low

with concentrated passion. "Do you hear? You would be safer taking Jacob's place down the pit with me."

Pattie did not answer. Never, never had her soul been so stirred; never, never had the sound of human voice sounded so much like the music of heaven.

With him—with Mr. Arthur! Deep down the dark, dangerous pits, that made her sick and giddy even to look down; yes, even *there*, life would be paradise waiting on Mr. Arthur. Or what did it mean, this strange throbbing of heart, that almost took away her breath, that made her tremble so, and her hands feel so icy cold? Neither of them spoke, they walked on in perfect silence, fighting a battle that was raging within, and they so unprepared to meet the storm.

Pattie was the first to recover herself.

"I ain't gone yet; and please, Mr. Arthur, whatever you do, don't say anything about it. Oh, don't, don't!"

"Won't I? Promise me not to go, else I will. Look at me, and say you won't entertain such a mad idea."

But Pattie did not want to look. She felt afraid to meet the very eyes she had lately seemed to seek. Arthur meant, however, that she should. He suddenly turned round and stood in front of her. His face was very white, and he saw that her generally calm face could be terribly moved. He clasped her hand.

"Pattie, you *could* not leave *me*!"

"Oh, don't, Mr. Arthur. I never knew you'd care."

"Care! Not care! You little know. I didn't know; but you won't go now."

"I shall have to," replied Pattie, sadly. "And what does it matter what happens me?"

"You'll drive me mad, if you talk like that! It matters all the world to me, to Miss Gerrie, to Jacob. Are we nothing to you, after all?"

"Oh, dear Mr. Arthur, don't you trouble; I can't bear it. Whatever would your pa and ma say, and Mr. Regie, and Miss Jessie, if they heard you, and me only poor Pattie Atkins! Please care note about me. I'd better die and lay in t' churchyard."

"Perhaps so if I could rest beside you, but

neither in life or death will we be quite separated. What has made you look at me so intently this evening?"

They had wandered on, on, long past the Hall Farm gates — passed the row of tumble-down cottages, and were nearing the common, both apparently unconscious whither they were drifting.

"Only something as Jacob said, and I was thinking as how even Miss Gerrie wasn't good enough for you."

"Think otherwise, Pattie; think that I am not good enough for her. Dear little Gerrie! What a friend she is of yours."

Here Pattie's features worked painfully, and great tears coursed down her now pale cheeks.

"Do hold your noise, Mr. Arthur. Don't you ever set her again me, whatever happens."

"What can happen? What do you mean? You are frightened and unnerved."

"Oh, lor! Mr. Arthur, wherever have we comed to? Let's turn back, or you go back and I'll go into my grandmother's."

It was getting dusk, a tall ungainly figure

was seen skulking in front of them, wearing a low slouched hat!

"You'll get me into iver such trouble if you don't go. Oh, do!"

"Indeed I won't leave you here, I'm no coward. I am not afraid of being seen with you, Pattie, and I mean to take care of you."

"I can take care of myself," returned the girl, obstinately, "and I will. Good night."

In a moment she had darted from him—past the long lane, past the fellow in the slouched hat, and was out of sight. Arthur was petrified for a moment. He felt he had been an unmitigated fool, if not a scoundrel. He knew that love that poor ignorant girl as he might, rouse in her what feelings he might, it would be out of his power to protect her at present, and by getting themselves talked about would be only dangerous to her reputation. And yet he trembled with apprehension on her account; and, leaping the stone wall close to where he stood, he waited for her in concealment—waited and waited what seemed hours, but she never came back. At last he once again scaled the wall,

and slowly and cautiously approached the row of houses in which dwelt old Mrs. Atkins. For his life he could not remember which was the one, and he durst not rap at any. For the first time in his life he felt a very coward, and it was a horrible feeling. Every shutter was closed, every door fastened, as he paced slowly past them all. Perhaps she would stay the night with the old woman as protection from *him*. Bewildered, wretched beyond description, he turned homewards baffled. His mother and Jessie were waiting up for him, and expressed astonishment at his late appearance, and felt still more alarm at his unusual demeanour. His answers were short, his face stern and hard. He took up his candle, kissed both mechanically, and went to his own room.

Mother and daughter gazed in each other's face.

"What can be the matter with him?" said the former.

"Something serious, I fear," returned Jessie; and before she went to bed she knocked gently

at his bedroom door and inquired if he wanted anything.

"Nothing, dear," was the answer. "Go to bed, Jessie. Good night."

And wise Jessie obeyed, knowing how hard it is to minister to a mind diseased, and that Arthur was suffering mental, not physical torture, had been plainly written on his face. She could hear him pace his floor backwards and forwards long after she had been in bed, and been startled from troubled slumbers.

It was Arthur's first experience of bitter pain and dread, and it completely overpowered him for the time. Something evil was hanging over Pattie, something mysterious, and all she entreated was that it might fall silently, that no hand might be stretched out to save her. And Pattie loved him, which fact but added to his agony. He had never thought it before that evening, never intoxicated himself with such a hope, now the certainty proved but torture. Yes, she loved him, but was determined not to give herself to him, but to leave Broughton. Oh,

hateful Broughton, that would no longer contain Pattie Atkins! and, besides, to what fate was she hastening in the city of every abomination? Keep silence! that was too much to ask. He would enter the pits no more until he had ascertained her movements, and he would follow her to the world's end at whatever cost.

CHAPTER IV.

THE morning after his walk with Pattie, Arthur appeared at the breakfast-table of the Rectory, dressed in his usual garments. His father, Jessie, and Laura were present, and expressed surprise at the unexpected pleasure of his company. Arthur was no adept in dissimulation; but, when occasion required, knew how to keep silence.

"I thought I heard you in your room, my boy, this morning at your usual hour."

"You did, father. I have had a breath of fresh air on the common; the weather is delicious. Girls, you should go out."

He tried to speak cheerfully, to give no sign of his intense anxiety; but his haggard face told a tale.

He ate mechanically whatever was put before him, all the time he was wondering, wondering.

After breakfast, the Rector read prayers ; but he was not either so long or impressive as the godless Squire.

Only this morning to Arthur they seemed of interminable length. Released at last, he went into the hall, took his hat, and walked out on to the lawn. There was a soft, gentle breeze, all the leaves shimmering in the sunlight seemed in their rustling to whisper comfort. The flower-beds were still wet with dew-drops, as if sympathising by their tears with his distress. He noticed nothing. That never-to-be-forgotten twilight scene with Pattie filled his soul with delicious, yet saddest memory. Without her, how awfully insipid would be all his noblest endeavours. Of course he could not then realise how real sorrow is essential to the perfect development of man. If any life could pass without it, the best part of our divine nature would never expand. He only thought that the present pain must be removed if possible. So he hurried past the lovely, silent flowers, out into the long,

green lane, unmindful of all its beauty; past the square-towered, old, ivy-grown church; past the "Swan Inn," where once that fatal fight had taken place; up the clean, white road, till he stood at Mrs. Earnshaw's little shop door, exactly opposite the old, massive gates, which shut in the ancient Hall and its magnificent grounds. There he paused. How could he inquire after Pattie? Would gossiping Mrs. Earnshaw have heard any news?

"Good morning, Mrs. Earnshaw," he said, learning dissimulation as circumstances taught him to require it. "Good morning: sent the children off to school yet?"

"Yes, sir, half an hour ago. There's nothing amiss, sir, is there, that you are at home to-day?"

"Oh no! A little headache; that is all, and a——"

"Ah! you are well off, you are. It matters nothing to such as you to lose a day; it is different with us, you see. A day's rest, ill or well, means less to eat for us and t' childer. We can't let *ours* stop at home, unless there is really summat amiss."

He did not know how to reply ; he could not tell her that never in his life before had anything been so much amiss with him. He could not tell her that work that day was sheer impossibility.

“ I’m afraid you will think me a lazy dog, Mrs. Earnshaw ; but I really have a cause for staying away from duty, though it may not be the same cause that would alone persuade your husband to neglect his work. You see, I have no one to provide for but myself, yet I don’t want to set a bad example.”

“ You set a bad example ! Bless yer, Mr. Arthur, that you never have done. All t’ men in t’ pits looks up to you as one in a thousand. They’d sooner serve *you* nor yer father, young as yer are.”

“ Oh, don’t say that ! Don’t talk of me. I’m not half as good as you all think ; but I——”

Arthur felt terribly unnerved. What had he done, and what was he going to do ? He, whose desire had always been to be of use to these poor fellows, by a bright and persevering example more than anything else.

“ Have you seen Jacob this morning ? ”

"Yes, sir; he went past here to school just before you came. He's getting on wonderful, they say; he's better at school than down in t' pits. He's always a wool-gathering wi' books and drawings, and making verses. Them things arn't for working folks."

"Not too much; but Jacob is a genius."

What that meant Mrs. Earnshaw had no idea. Arthur was taking out some coppers, and that absorbed her interest entirely. He bought some peppermint bull's-eyes and acid drops, and bade her farewell, still undetermined whither next to wend his steps. If he called at the school, his visit at that hour would make quite a sensation. Indeed, whoever he met would express surprise, which he would be unable to answer in a satisfactory manner.

Walking contemplatively on the foot-path, he reached Hall Farm gate, which he opened on mere impulse. It was unusually quiet; only a few fowls were picking among the refuse. No sign or sound of human activity. But his determination to find out something strengthened. A lucky thought came into his head; he would

go to the cottage of the Atkins', and ask the return of a book he had lent to Jacob some time back. He found the door locked. How his heart beat; he never knew it had such power of pulsation. Growing bolder with desperation, he went to the farm itself. Good Mrs. Tupman was engaged, energetically enough, in washing out the milk-bowls. How beautifully clean everything looked in that capacious kitchen!

"Where are all the family next door?" inquired Arthur.

"The children are gone to school, sir, with Jacob. Atkins is in the Hall gardening, and I just a bit sin saw the missis go out. But we're not on speaking terms, so I know note about her. Pattie I've never seen this morning. Poor lass!"

"Is she ill-treated?" asked Arthur.

"Often enough. Sometimes I think as how she's half clemmed. When I've had occasion to go in, I've seen her waiting on her father and step-mother like a servant more nor a child. Many a bit I've give Pattie, and will again, spite of her upstartishness. But these servants, as comes from

grand houses, are all stuck-up alike, aping their missises, they thinks. I fair hates the sight on 'em."

Poor Pattie! She might well look thin and sad.

"Miss Gerrie would never allow Pattie to be ill-treated, I'm sure."

"Not if she knowed it, sir; but Pattie was always close—very."

Finding that there was nothing more of immediate consequence to be gained from Mrs. Tupman, Arthur left the farm. Closing the gate behind him, he paused, looked up towards the common, then down towards the Hall. Which way should he take? To the common, to Dovedale Row? There he would find her grandmother, and perhaps see Pattie herself. Not his Pattie, no; he was not at all decided to continue any love-making, he would be satisfied to have her restored to the old footing, to keep her and himself in their original positions, and to go on exactly as if nothing had ever transpired to alter the relations between them. Would to Heaven that could be, for the love of the last few years was like the dim light of a

rushlight to the burning fiery furnace he was now passing through. Could he manage to come out unscathed, unharmed, as did the three of world renown?

Having determined on his course, he hurried to complete it. He reached Dovedale Row, a sorry representative, too, of the far-famed valley of unexampled loveliness. The pavement was uneven upon which the black-painted doors of the dismal-looking cottages opened. The small square windows were some of them disreputable, with dirty-looking curtains, and occasional brown paper panes; such, however, could not belong to any of the family of Atkins. Here was one with the door partially open, upon the step of which sat a comfortable, well-nourished black cat. Arthur knocked and entered simultaneously. There sat before the fire a solitary woman, peeling potatoes. There was nothing peculiar in that; most cottages at that hour were vacated by all but women. This woman was a comfortable one, fair and fat, tidily dressed, conscious of her good looks in spite of her years—for she must have been between fifty and sixty. Arthur recognised her as Pattie's

grandmother for she used to be a regular attendant at church when most of the pews were empty, before she came to live on the common.

"Ah, Mrs. Atkins, how curious I should have found you out; I never knew which was your house. How comfortable you look. It's very hot this morning."

"Will you sit yer down a bit, sir?"

"Don't get up, pray. I'll just rest a minute." And he sat astride a chair with all the nonchalance he could assume, cane and hat in hand, for he invariably showed the same good manners in the cottage as in the Hall. Mrs. Atkins looked keenly at him, and did not marvel that her grand-daughter declared him to be "fair beautiful;" yet with a woman's wit she knew there was "something up." Was he too after Pattie? "Lor, what a thing is a pretty face!" But Arthur did not at once speak of Pattie; he inquired quite tenderly how the widow managed to maintain herself.

"I goes out nursing, you see, sir, and my son James is very good to me; but it is but little he can do now for me since he married that stuck-up madam!"

“Do you ever hear anything of your less fortunate son?” inquired Arthur, for want of something better o say.

“Lor bless you, sir, he never dare show his face in these parts again. Not that he ever meant to harm t’old man except for giving blow for blow, only you see the gentlefolks were all again’ him ’cause he used to poach a bit. And not for want of teaching better either; and a kinder-hearted, better lad to his mother never lived.”

“Ah, it was a sad business for you! Have you never heard of him since?”

“Well, sir, it don’t do to talk: you’ll excuse me, but walls have ears!” And the poor woman took up the corner of her apron to wipe away her tears.

Arthur mentally called himself an idiot for tormenting her so needlessly, just for the sake of leading up to the subject so near his heart.

“I don’t think Pattie’s new mother is a good one; indeed, by what people say, Pattie must have a hard time of it.”

“Indeed, and that she has, poor lass! But, as I tell her, she’s got her grannie to come to.

Indeed, here she was all last night, for she darn't go home."

"Is she here now?"

"No, sir, she went out betimes. But they'll none be scared; I sent 'em word down as how she were wi' me."

What a load of anxiety was lifted from Arthur's heart! She was safe! She had a true blood relative, a good friend, even in her own grandmother. Arthur's heart warmed; he opened his purse and gave the poor widow half-a-sovereign, saying:

"You keep her, Mrs. Atkins. I will tell Miss Hoxton where she is, and she will find her a good home somewhere; perhaps at the Hall itself. Your son has been so good a servant so many years, the Squire is sure to do what he can for his daughter."

The old woman seemed struck "all of a heap," as they say, at this unexpected godsend.

"Oh, no, sir, it's too much," she muttered.
"Oh, dear a me!"

Arthur could scarcely understand her, she showed so much modest independence mixed

with anxiety. But, thankful at the good news, and with renewed peace of mind, he bade her good morning and hurried back home, determined to have some lunch, change his clothes, and be off to the pit at once.

What right had he to indulge in the luxury of a holiday more than other men? How little able was he to endure what these ignorant fellows had to suffer times innumerable. Bread for them must be earned if their hearts were racked with mental torture or their bodies with physical pain.

Arthur often felt he was entertaining almost treasonable opinions, and that he dared not give expression to such among the men without risking his own occupation. On this occasion he put them away and gave the rein to wiser thoughts about Pattie. He did not attempt to deny to himself that he loved that poor, ignorant child, nor did he for one moment promise himself that he could cease to love her. But he resolved to abstain from any further declaration of that passion, if only she herself would manifest no deeper interest in him than she yet had done. He

saw plainly the unsuitableness of such a marriage, the impossibility of now ever training her to be a life companion for himself, but her sweet face had burnt itself irradicably on his heart. He would never marry. He would never wrong another by offering her a divided heart. He knew this strange, silently-growing love for the worse than motherless girl was strong as death. It was no sudden passing fancy. But this love should rest unexpressed in his heart, pure and stainless for ever. No rival would ever share her throne. The fear of losing her had revealed to him the depth of his affection; alas, it had revealed more—even Pattie's love to him. But a young girl like that, courted and admired by young men in her own walk in life, would soon become the contented wife of some good fellow, perhaps of Reuben May. Why not? He would never upbraid her, he would never again plead for himself, but would for ever be her friend, her faithful friend. She should only see his strength, never his weakness; his calmest, not his tempestuous moods. And yet, and yet, if one kiss on that sweet face, still pure and loving as he last had seen it, led to death, that one kiss

he imagined would be worth the final pang. His step was lighter as he went back to the Rectory than when he left it. Pattie was somewhere in the neighbourhood, and breathing the same atmosphere. He should see her gentle, patient face in the gallery on Sunday, and hear her sweet voice. The very thought of the relief gained by that hope made him feel stronger, better, and braver than he had done at early dawn. Now the sky was blazoned with the strong rays of the noonday sun. He took off his hat, that the slight breeze might cool his temples. He felt endowed with manly courage, but youth had fled. He had achieved a kind of mental victory over himself, and his aspirations towards a higher, self-sacrificing life seemed to give him renewed inspiration. It was not the joy of a secret courtship, but the determination to renounce such joy that to her might be no boon, to himself a doubtful one, and to his family a real affliction. Renunciation! He was young to learn what that meant. It is no easy matter to chain and keep within bars of iron a pent-up, gnawing want. Yet this young man set

himself that day even such a task, and did not quail.

He remembered that it was against the rules for men to go to the mine after a certain hour. This afternoon he would give to Jessie, and escort her whither she would.

His sisters were both delighted to hear his step in the hall. Jessie had just returned from her morning's occupation of superintending the education of Gerrie and Vernon Hoxton. She did not appear to tire of it, as had been prophesied by others. In fact she said she received quite as much benefit as she gave. She detested having time on her hands to dispose of as she pleased; nothing then seemed to please her as much as teasing some one else. Laura was a grand object to exercise her wits upon, who passed her time in very much the same way as a domestic pet: ensconced in some easy-chair with a book, playing on the rug with Rover or the kitten, titivating herself at the glass, or enthralled in some extra frillings for her dress. Wearied with those frivolities, she would brighten her little jewelleries,

dawdle about on the lawn, or even try to play croquet by herself.

"Oh, dear me!" she exclaimed, "how beastly hot it is. Arthur, where *have* you been? You might have taken me with you."

"If I had, you would have found it uncommonly warm. But, girls, we will go out this afternoon somewhere. Where shall it be?"

"To Lutterfield," said Jessie. "Gerrie and I want to do some shopping for our mothers."

"Oh, fancy! sitting pent up with some of these dirty creatures, many of them reeking with gin and tobacco-smoke!" cried Laura. "Are you going to make them underclothing? Has papa really agreed to let you have his study for them?"

"He really has."

"Well, you *are* going to metamorphose the poor old dear between you! I call it a shame."

"We must do something more for the poor people in this populous parish," said Arthur. "Think how it has grown since we first came, eighteen years ago, and yet the church is nearly empty, and most of the people around us are

total strangers. You idle little monkey, you might surely do something for somebody."

"Oh, yes, of course! I might go out nursing, or, perhaps, learn to peel 'taters, wash pots, and wait on folks,' like Topsy. How would that suit our Radical?"

"Well, you might learn worse than that," he replied, grimly; "but, Jessie, how many mothers do you expect?"

"About ten, at first. Ellen Beardmore is going out to service, and wants clothing, so we are all going to give our first afternoon for Mrs. Beardmore's benefit. Indeed, we will make our mothers' meetings veritable Dorcas meetings, and let the poor have as much of the luxury of doing good as we can. It must be to them, as to us, more blessed to give than receive, when possible."

"You'll find they would a great deal rather receive," said Laura, laughing. "Oh, Jessie dear, good Jessie! you do really expect impossibilities."

"Yes, indeed, my dear," said Mrs. Jewel, who, as a rule, was one of the most acquiescent of

mothers. "The lower orders are fearfully grasping, and jealous of each other. If one of them receives a kindness, all her neighbours begrudge it."

"That's human nature, mother," said Arthur, "nowhere seen clearer than in the nurseries of the rich. What squabbles we used to have, to be sure, and look at that young Vernon."

"He's generous enough," replied Jessie, always anxious to defend the boy who yielded her obedience and affection. "He would give away everything he has, on impulse."

"And the poor, uneducated people are just the same, and kind to each other at times without reason; impulsively kind, yet begrudging every attention bestowed by another. I am sure, to hear the tales they tell of each other is enough to make one despond of ever doing them good," said Mrs. Jewel.

"Let us remember the ten lepers, and take heart," said Arthur. "I am determined never to expect gratitude, never; if it comes, it will be always a pleasant surprise, but it is an unworthy motive to work upon."

"Well, I am more hopeful," said Jessie, "and I think that the poor have very little to be grateful to us for as yet."

"The wish to do good, dear Jessie, is laudable in you," said her mother; "but by mixing with these people, you must be very cautious. They are subject to so many infectious diseases, their habits are so uncleanly, their morals so lax, that I grant you I am rather nervous at your coming into close personal contact with them."

Jessie sighed. There seemed so many drawbacks to all her aspirations of benefiting the people she felt her father lived among for no other purpose. Yes, she sighed almost hopelessly, yet she knew how grossly their faults were exaggerated.

"Don't be afraid, Jessie," said Arthur, "and, mother mine, don't scare us with your forebodings; we want a heart for any fate. If we do not work at the risk of every danger, as a clergyman's family, I feel we are out of place in this dear old home. Surely it is for the good of people around us that we live here at all. Isn't it, mother?"

"Well, my dear, that is your way of looking at it, but——"

"It is the right way, mother," said Arthur ; "though I believe many of the parsons and their families think that these churches and rectory-houses were all built and endowed for no other purpose than to provide a gentlemanly profession with pretty incomes for a superior class of men, that they may teach the poor their catechism, and keep them lowly and reverent to all their betters."

"And a very good thing, too," cried Laura. "Isn't it, ma?"

"I'm sure it is more than we could do, at any rate."

"The catechism, Miss Laura, is for all sorts and conditions of men, women, girls, and boys. How have you yourself profited by it? Have you yet learnt who are *your* betters?"

Laura laughed derisively.

"Can't find them anywhere."

"There must be a best somewhere. Have you arrived at that pinnacle in your own little estimation?"

"Perhaps I have," replied Laura, saucily.

Arthur felt, on that particular occasion, that any argument was disagreeable to him, especially with a younger sister, whose goddess was herself. What did she know of such questions; in fact, what did most people understand about facts they persistently accepted as inevitable? *Laisser faire* was to Arthur an atrocious doctrine, inculcated in so many from the cradle to the grave. Let things alone. Inequalities must exist, injustice must rule, oppressions must continue. In their own case, life was made very tolerable, therefore better let well alone and teach the less fortunate one most necessary virtue, submission, and if possible, contentment.

That Arthur and Jessie troubled themselves more about things as they existed than did the sufferers themselves, was a palpable fact. And, there lay the folly.

What might not Pattie Atkins have been, had she been born under more auspicious circumstances, was a subject of thought for this young man. Fancy a girl with such a face, such a voice, educated, trained to perfection; with that

guileless, modest smile, that perfect unconsciousness of her own beauty, and indifference to admiration. What a helpmeet might such a one be to any man. As fate had ordained it, however, to him she would now be a drawback; to his family, disgrace.

He drove the girls to Lutterfield, where purchases were quickly made, that they might take a longer drive round and be home to tea at six.

Their conveyance was an old four-wheeler, which the Rector had bought some twelve years back. The expense of his horse he always declared kept him poor; but on no account would he dispense with it, for both he and his wife were chronic invalids, Broughton was exceedingly dull, and walking unpleasant.

No one begrudged the melancholy-looking pair this indulgence, and as Arthur and Jessie frequently turned it into a kind of village omnibus, it was certainly a boon to more than the Rector and his wife. They did not do this without their father's knowledge and consent.

It was a lovely neighbourhood. The roads were good though the hills were steep. The old horse was invariably tenderly dealt with, Arthur frequently descending to lighten the burden, chatting pleasantly to the girls as they slowly mounted the hills. He talked of Pattie's home discomforts to Gerrie, and blessed her in his heart when she expressed a strong desire to have her at the Hall.

"She looks too delicate for a scullery-maid. Dear old nurse says she ought to leave us now, for Vernon is too big for her to manage. Perhaps papa will let me have Pattie for my own little maid, if nursie goes."

Jessie declared nurse was a fixture, for, with all his faults, the Squire always kept his servants year after year, and never allowed them to wait for their wages, whatever became of the grocer, draper, or butcher; and to imagine the Hall without the presence of Jones, Bolton, or nurse, seemed altogether incompatible with its keeping.

"Nurse is your maid now, I think," said Jessie.

“So she is, and I would not willingly change her even for Pattie. But something must be done.”

Yes, yes! dear Gerrie, something must be done; but it was not you who did it.

CHAPTER V.

GERRIE sent for the gardener when she reached home, and he came at once.

"Atkins, I am anxious about Pattie; I hear rumours that home is not much of a home to her now. What can be done?"

"Who's been complaining, Miss Gerrie? I can't be always on the spot, but things are quiet enough when I am. She's gone off to her grandmother's now, who sides with her all along, and never telled a word to any on us. That can't be right. I'm almost afraid she isn't as good as she might be. She's a deal too close."

"Your wife is harsh to her, perhaps."

"Note o' t' soart, miss! Pattie's obstinate."

"Oh, Atkins, don't you turn against your own motherless girl!"

"Indeed I don't. But she tells *me* note again

her step-mother, and I can't go upon hearsay. And then to stop out of a night!"

"Won't you go to your mother's and tell Pattie I want her? And, Atkins, don't be cross to her or you will frighten her."

"Not I, miss; but seeing as how I'm her father, I must see that she does as she ought. My mother shouldn't keep her from home without my knowing aught about it."

Atkins felt grieved—nay, more, indignant. He was a sensitive, proud man, and disliked having his private affairs discussed by any one. He felt inclined to frighten Pattie out of her senses, and teach her better than to cause gossip about him and his affairs. He had been taken in by the smart appearance of his new wife. She had a tongue that stung like a wasp, and use it as often as she might it always retained its sharpness. He wished in vain for the peace and quietness of olden days, but what on earth was the use of setting folks by the ears by telling them the troubles for which there was absolutely no remedy?

Like Pattie, he had a large stock of common

sense for practical use, but never speculated or hoped much for better things. He was proud of Jacob's learning, without an atom of sympathy with his ambition. But he was terrified, absolutely terrified, like many men, of being ridiculed or pitied. And Pattie threatened to bring him to disgrace, and if she did he dared not answer for the consequences.

However, he would go that very night and force her back home, and come to a clear understanding with her.

"I'll fetch her home to-night, Miss Gerrie, and see what's amiss. It will, perhaps, be too late for her to come to you, but the first thing in the morning I'll see to it as she comes in."

"But do be kind to her, Atkins, it is not she who has complained only."

"I'll be kind enough, miss, don't alarm yourself; isn't she my own flesh and blood? Thank you, miss, for your goodness to her. I hope she'll none make an ungrateful return, but girls is girls."

"Good night, Atkins. I shall be so glad when she is back."

So Atkins went out of the Hall into his cottage home, but in no good humour with anybody concerned.

"What's been up wi' you and Pattie that she stops away like this?" he said to his wife.

"Nothing! We had no words all the week; she had been behaving herself much better. *I* can't tell what's up with her I'm sure."

"Well, then, I'll find out for myself."

He went into the back kitchen and washed himself, declined to partake of any refreshment, but at once went out into the cool summer evening air. He felt anxious, with undefined fears.

Walking straight into his mother's cottage, he made the old woman start. She was not alone. Rachel Rawson was sitting at the opposite corner of the fireplace, both silently smoking long white clay pipes.

They both looked absolutely dumbfounded, and stared at him with apparent blank amazement, though all the time they had been expecting him an hour ago.

"Well, you are a stranger, John," exclaimed his mother.

"And I declare I haven't seen you a year and more," said the other, holding out her wrinkled, hard-worn hand.

He took it, but was too much annoyed at not seeing Pattie to give it a hearty shake.

"Where's our Pattie? She mun come home at once."

"Lor bless the lad! She is gone, first thing this morning, from here. She told me she were going to Rachel's, but she left there directly, and we supposed she'd gone home."

Atkins' face went ghastly white.

"Home! she's niver been int' house to-day. And this time a night too. Mother, tha's let that lass come to summat."

Grandmother Atkins took up her apron and began to whimper.

"Now call *me* for it, as if it were *my* fault as your house were onbearable to her, poor lass!"

"Poor lass, indeed! a reg'lar bad 'un, that's what you've turned her out, a spoiling of her as you have. But it's no use talking, we must find her anyhow."

"I only hope you may, but I've no more notion where to look than—than——"

Poor old woman; she knew not what comparison to make in this case. No more did Atkins; for Pattie had never made girl friends in the village that he knew of, and he could not, at that time of night, knock at people's doors to make inquiries respecting her movements. He would go back and set Jacob off on the search.

"Good night. It isn't likely as you two old folks can go a hunting at this time; but this is an awful business." He hurried home like one demented. He was not passionately attached to Pattie, or to any one on earth; but she belonged to him, and woe be to any one that really wronged her.

"Jacob," he almost shouted on reaching home: "where's our Pattie?"

"Pattie! Isn't she at my grandmother's?"

"No, she isn't. Left there this morning for home, and never comed here. Make haste, lad, get thee boots on, and come wi' me, for we must find her afore we sleep."

Jacob was horrified, too. Poor, quiet, patient Pattie, who had for so many years been their little maid of all work. What could have befallen her?

"Perhaps she's with Miss Gerrie," he said, as he laced up his boots, "or at the Rectory."

"Not wi' Miss Gerrie, so don't go to th' Hall again. Miss Jessie may know summat, or have heard a whispering. Be sharp, lad!"

The two went out—father and son. They stood at the corner. Mrs. Earnshaw came out. Oh, how they hated making the inquiry: "Have you seen Pattie?"

"Ello! anything amiss, Mester Atkins?" for the gardener, as a retainer of the Squire's, was next door to the Squire in importance among the villagers, as was Jones.

"Well, my daughter is gone out, and it's late. I wonder where she can be gossiping: it's time she was at home."

"She isn't much of a gossip," replied the good woman. "She seems to me remarkable close, never has much to say."

"You haven't seen her, then?"

"Not once to-day. Here, Charlie, have you seen Pattie Atkins anywhere?"

"No, mother."

"Now for the Rectory. Jacob, you go on, while I get a glass at the 'Swan.' I might hear something there."

Jacob went round to the back door. All the young folks at the Rectory were assembled in the drawing-room. Jacob asked for Mr. Arthur, who quickly appeared.

"Will you come out wi' me a bit, sir!" said Jacob. Arthur's heart sank within him; Jacob did not wear such a look for nothing.

"Certainly!" He fetched his low, soft hat, and, taking Jacob's arm, walked down the shady avenue, where the pale moon peered sadly through the foliage.

"What's the matter, Jacob?"

"We've lost Pattie, sir; for God's sake if you know anything about her, tell us!"

Arthur stood quite still. What did he know? Should he tell her brother how madly he had betrayed himself the evening before, what terror

he had endured through the night on her behalf, and how joy had been restored?

"I thought she was with her grandmother."

"So did we, but she left her early this morning for home, and has never turned up. What can have happened her?"

"Jacob, I will tell you what I know. I had heard that she was unhappy at home, and, as I walked up the common with her, I asked her if she would like to leave home. She then gave me to understand that she intended to go to London. I threatened to tell some one, to prevent the carrying out of such a mad idea, but I could worm nothing out of her. And she suddenly ran towards her grandmother's with full speed. This made me very uneasy. I waited for her return, but she never came, and that was the reason I did not enter the mine to-day. Her grandmother told me she had gone to Mrs. Rawson's."

"Thank you, Mr. Arthur, for telling me. Then it's to London she's gone, that's certain, for Pattie isn't one to talk what she don't mean. We must go to the stations and make inquiries."

"I'll come with you; but, if she is gone there, God knows what will become of her, and if we shall ever see her again in this world! I will follow her there, and employ every means to trace her."

With ill-concealed pain, he tried to speak calmly, while his heart was pulsating furiously. Was Pattie mad! What could have induced her to run away, when he knew she loved him? She had not said so in words. What words could even express what her usually apathetic face had spoken so eloquently? Besides, she could not have gone alone and unaided. Where could she have obtained a sufficient sum for her railway fare?

"Had she any money, Jacob?"

"Not a penny that I know of, sir."

"Then she must have got some from another person. Who does she know likely to advance her so much? Would old Joe Bannington? She was a great favourite with him, and it is said he has saved a good round sum."

"She would never ask, sir. She would beg her way first."

They reached the "Black Swan." Jacob

entered and told his father that he had better leave the business to him and Mr. Arthur; they fancied they had a clue.

Poor Atkins! Absolutely he daren't inquire after his girl in that rough place. He followed Jacob.

"Mr. Arthur! God bless you, sir! If we don't find that girl, I shall never lift up my head again in Broughton."

And Arthur reciprocated the feeling. Pattie lost to him was bad enough, but Pattie lost to herself would be infinitely worse.

The two young men walked silently along the turnpike road, gleaming whiter than ever under the pale moonlight. Tokens of continuous human industry, however, were visible to the left of them, in the glowing red of the sky from the reflection of the innumerable blast furnaces of the neighbourhood. The little birds were cosily sheltered in their nests, supposed to be dreamless and unconscious; but who really knows but that all animal life is troubled with unexpressed and inexpressible ideas, memories of the past, and fears for the future?

Arthur's were now all blighted; he felt like a destitute beggar, robbed of all he counted dearest in life. What unseen force had been exerted to lure her away from Broughton, from father and mother, friends, and—yes, it was true—a desperate lover, who would have died to save her?

It was impossible to converse with Jacob, because it would be worse than folly to tell him what an idol he had set up in his heart, what madness raged there. He did not attempt to cope with it during that unutterably wretched walk. When Jacob made a remark, Arthur replied abruptly: "Don't talk, for Heaven's sake!"

They passed the Lodge. They had little communication with the inmates, and the handsome mansion to them was equally insignificant as a heap of stones by the wayside. They hurried down the hill, and instead of turning up to Mrs. Rawson's lonely dwelling, they marched up the almost perpendicular ascent to Eccleton, the nearest station to Broughton, and a few miles nearer to London than Lutterfield. This, to a girl with little money, would be a consideration.

They soon reached the station. The lonely porter who had come to attend to the mail train had not been on duty during the day-time, and could, therefore, give no information.

“Where did the porter live who had been on the platform when the parliamentary train had started for London?”

“Didn’t know. There was more than one porter.”

Arthur felt inclined to swear, but controlled himself; he knew he had come on a useless, senseless errand, but it was better than doing nothing.

“We can’t find anything out here, Jacob. Let us return.”

“What is to be done, sir? I can’t believe ill of Pattie. I never felt so upset in my life.”

“Poor fellow!” said Arthur. “And what a glorious night to endure such anxiety. Rain and storm would suit us better.”

“She liked you, Mr. Arthur. If anybody could fetch her back it would be you.”

“If she had cared for me, she would never have gone on such a mad journey, Jacob; I

entreated her not. There must have been some strong reason to allure her from Broughton, for I know she loved quietly Miss Gerrie, and all of you."

Jacob did not answer.

"What shall we do now?" asked Arthur, as they stood together by the church wall, draped with ivy, while two tall elder trees hid from them the brilliant moon. They looked into each other's face with hopeless despondency; but Arthur's exceeded. The village was densely silent; the public-houses were quiet; bright-eyed flowers were closed for the night, even the nightingale's plaintive song was hushed, as they stood under the great dome of the star-spangled heavens, utterly powerless to save one helpless wanderer.

"God only can direct us, Mr. Arthur. He can take care of our poor Pattie, though she is out of our reach. It is at such times as these we should trust in Him, isn't it, sir?"

Jacob was not blind; he knew perfectly well that his sufferings were like that of a pin's prick

in comparison to those of his gentlemanly companion, and he wanted to comfort him. Arthur took off his hat, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. He imagined that had he not spoken to Pattie, she would not have been so precipitate. He was so indignant with himself. And yet, if she really loved him, *that* alone would preserve her from temptation, and perhaps bring her back; for love, *real love*, must triumph over all, ennobling and strengthening the character, chastening every passion, and is the absolute foundation of all morality. Yes; he would trust in God to keep her from all things hurtful, even from him, if He knew it was better for her.

“Aye, lad, my good fellow, thanks for that reminder. God is not, as we are, limited in His power. He can guard and guide her in the din of the London streets, as well as in the silence of the country meadows. We must part here and wait.”

“Don’t think hard of her, sir; Pattie is a good girl, I’ll wager.”

“*I* think hard of her! No fear of that. Truthful, loving, patient, that is my undying opinion of Pattie.”

“God bless you, Mr. Arthur. We shall find her yet.” And they grasped hands as brothers, not as equals.

CHAPTER VI.

SQUIRE HOXTON had made peace with his widowed, wealthy sister, who was gradually becoming convalescent, and had thus accomplished the object of his visit to town. Years back he had been grateful for any pretence that led him thither; but things had changed. What few living friends remained to love him, or at any rate that he could love, were now in Broughton; so it was with infinite relief from boredom that he comfortably ensconced himself in a first-class carriage, which took him from London northwards. He had been under a secret fear of something disagreeable taking place while with his sister; for Squire Hoxton had enemies, who at times resided in the metropolis, one whom he absolutely feared. But three weeks had passed without molestation, and he was now out of danger. Gerrie had written

regularly, as he had desired her to do, and everything was happening according to his mind. Vernon was giving less trouble; Miss Jessie was indefatigable, and life to him just then seemed more than usual worth living. In the unfathomable depths of his own heart he had secret aims. Without some special desire, with hope of ultimate satisfaction, life is decidedly *not* worth living. It is monotonously insipid, and to stretch, and yawn, and vegetate are its highest possibilities. But he had a new interest in life. No one knew but himself what that interest was. No one need know at present.

He smiled to himself with inward gratification that he was drawing nearer to the magnet that was going to renew his youth like the eagle's. He became impatient, the journey seemed interminable; he was the solitary inmate of that compartment, was always restless, detesting restraint. He drew out the daily paper from his capacious pocket, and commenced to peruse its lengthy columns.

The leaders always were first glanced through, and he then invariably turned to the law reports,

disputed will cases, divorces, libels, etc.; from them to lesser cases of interest, even to petty thefts. His eye was presently attracted by the words, "Strange conduct of a young girl." The Squire was always interested in young girls, and kind to them. This turned out to be the account of a girl who was caught by a policeman as she was tearing down some unfrequented street in Kensington, as if running from pursuit. She had at any rate evaded her pursuers, for no one appeared; but the policeman, finding on her finger a diamond ring of great value, also on her person a purse containing a sovereign, and a hat which had evidently belonged to some one in the upper ranks of life, besides an expensive crimson bow, tied to the long plait of hair hanging down her back, had thought himself justified in apprehending her. She absolutely refused to give any account of herself. She was evidently from the country, and perfectly ignorant of town customs, was intelligent and handsome. When before the magistrates, she retained the same rigid silence, and only repeatedly declared that she could not remove the ring that had been given to her,

because it was so tight-fitting. She refused her name, her address, or that of any friend, and declared she would rather stay in prison than return to the home she had left. She was remanded in hopes that the publication of the case might bring some one forward to identify her.

He read it carelessly, and turned to other paragraphs. A shocking murder next took his attention, and put the other case quite out of his mind.

Punctual to its time, the train drew up at Lutterfield Station, where Atkins awaited his master in the dog-cart. Atkins' face told a tale of suffering and sleeplessness. There was a hang-dog look about the man, too; he did not meet his master's eyes with the old unabashed respect of former days. He touched his hat as if ashamed, and his eyes looked down. He had been guilty of some indiscretion during his master's absence, the Squire thought; but he would forgive him anything but poaching.

"All right at home?" asked the Squire, as they drove lightly along the clean macadamised road.

"At the Hall, sir; but misfortune has befallen *me* as I never expected. My Pattie has run away."

"Where to? I suppose that you don't know."

"Yes, sir; I think as how she's gone to London."

"Silly little fool! What made her do it? That accounts for your glum looks, then?"

"Yes, sir; I shall never be the same man again. You see, sir, it's the disgrace of such a thing; and all the place a-talking about her being badly treated, and driven to it."

"Certainly not pleasant; but what are you going to do, my man?"

"Jacob and Mr. Arthur have gone after her; they are going to employ detectives, and set the perlice or anything to get her back. Mr. Arthur knows London, and he is in an awful way about it."

"How's Miss Gerrie?"

"She's put about a good deal, too, sir; it's very good of her, I'm sure."

"Ah, yes; Pattie always interested Gerrie. She imagined there was no *young lady* better behaved

than your girl. This is a fine ending to such excellence."

"I hope, sir, as you won't think any worse of me for it."

"Certainly not; how can fathers be answerable for their children's vagaries?"

To turn the subject, the Squire inquired after certain of the cattle, after the preserves on his land, the poachers who infested them, the farm-yard, and the fish in the trout stream. All replies were satisfactory; but the subject nearest his heart he never once mentioned.

The great, massive gates opened wide to receive their owner, the woman at the lodge curtseyed low, Jones met him with his usual obsequious politeness, never overdone; and Gerrie and Vernon came flying into his arms, as if he were the very best father in the county.

It was not an unpleasant home-coming by any means, and the evening Psalm was read with much solemnity: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

He was not more than forty-two years of age; not too old to love, or to indulge in an ideal

human life, that hitherto had had no place in his mind. The early, uncongenial marriage had tended to make him settle down into a kind of ignoble ease, contented, as much as possible, with all the animal comfort and outward prosperity he could command. Self-love had been the highest, or, rather, his only love. Everything was sacrificed to gratify that; all other passions were subservient to it. Now he had even grown weary of self, and he longed for another upon whom to bestow his affections. He was astonished at himself; he deplored his past immoralities, actually felt aspirations for the higher life, which he believed the object of his last adoration had really attained. He began to understand something of the beauty of Goodness. He cared nothing for old-fashioned, Puritanical dogmas, he gave way to no fears of eternal perdition, or hopes of bliss beyond the grave. He wanted to enter the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, by marriage with one who would bring the whole world into harmony, an ideal marriage that would elevate, and eternally satisfy he imagined, each perfecting the other. What a blessing such a marriage would be to Gerrie, to

Vernon, to the parish, for he would help and never hinder *her* in her efforts to do good, nay, he would himself strive to be worthy of her. These thoughts made his handsome face brighten with hope. Gerrie marvelled at the momentary transformation that took place while he stood talking to her, for as suddenly that deep indentation between the eyes stood out plainer than ever, and the smile would give place to a look of tormenting remorse. The cup was near, filled to the brim with delicious nectar; but was it for him? Might he stretch out his hand and quaff the tempting draught?

Patience, patience! Oh, how hard he found it.

At the usual hour—ten o'clock, Jessie passed through the Hall gates. She had not learnt that the Squire had returned, and no one had ever heard her say that she would be glad when he did so. But he was looking out for her, and when he saw her draw near to the porch, he himself opened the door to prevent the appearance of Jones. In his mad exceeding joy to see that bright young face, which he believed he had but to ask for and to gain for his own, he held out

both hands; impulsively she yielded both hers, and he held them fast.

"Are you glad to see me, child?" His voice was scarcely beyond a whisper. And what a veritable child she appeared to him, scarcely an inch taller than his own little daughter, and with a face fresh and fair as hers.

"Very!" she replied, truthfully. No man as yet had ever stood before her with such evident delight in *her* presence, forgetful of all else, and her cheeks glowed with an emotion quite new to her.

"There, go in! I'm satisfied *for the present*," he said, putting an emphasis on the last three words, and accompanying them with a look that made her heart throb. He loosened his hold of those small hands, took his hat and went out as she passed in to her tedious duties. For though Jessie preferred teaching to idleness, there is no real pleasure in superintending the education of one or two pupils, it lacks the stimulus and excitement that numbers give.

"Have you seen papa? He has come back," said Gerrie, for she could see by Jessie's face that she was pleased.

"Yes, dear."

"He showed me a paragraph in the daily paper of yesterday about a country girl in London, and I feel it is Pattie—indeed, I feel sure it is. Only fancy her with a diamond ring on though. Pattie would never, never steal. How could she have got it in her possession?"

"I don't believe it is Pattie, then!" replied Jessie, "for, as you say, she would never steal. Let me see the paper."

It was found, and the two girls perused it together. The rigid silence maintained as to her antecedents was certainly what one might expect from the lost girl. They hoped Arthur would see that account and go and see if it were really Pattie.

Her disappearance was the talk of the place, especially as no clue could be found. If any one could divulge the secret they remained as silent as the grave. Gerrie and Jessie decided that they would go to her grandmother and show her the paper as soon as lessons were over. This they did. The old woman did not seem particularly pleased to see them as they entered

the cottage, nor did she appear very much distressed on account of her grand-daughter.

"Ah!" she said, "folks may talk, but our Pattie's none soft, she knows how to take care of hersen—trust her."

"We thought you would like to hear this, Mrs. Atkins. Papa brought this paper down from London, and the case somehow makes us think it may be poor dear Pattie."

"What is it, miss?"

And Jessie read distinctly the whole paragraph, while the tears filled Gerrie's eyes.

"Oh, Miss Jewel, Miss Jewel! Yer don't think as how that is our Pattie, wi' a diamond ring and afore the magistrates? She'd never be *that* soft; and as for her stealing a pin, I know better." But the old woman was terrified, and kept muttering:

"Oh, dear a me, dear a me! She'd never do in that way!"

"If Mr. Arthur or Jacob sees it, and it is really Pattie, of course they will save her, if they can," said Jessie.

"If they can—if they can. Oh, dear a me!"

Mrs. Atkins got up, walked up and down, and then reached from off the peg her well-worn bonnet and shawl.

"If you'll be so good, young ladies, I'll take this to Rachel Rawson. She's as bad as me about th' lass."

"Oh, you may. And if you hear anything you will let us know, won't you?"

"You may depend on me, young ladies, as sure as I hear aught you shall."

So they returned home, more anxious than ever as to the fate of poor Pattie Atkins.

Marylebone Police Court was crowded that morning and stifling. The trembling Pattie stood up before the interrogating magistrate, terribly frightened. She did not look around, but kept her eyes down, those beautiful eyes that had reached into the soul of a young man, who shaded his face with his hand, while a still younger youth stood up and spoke up in a clear voice:

"That is my sister."

"Your name, young man?"

"Jacob Atkins, and that is my sister Pattie."

"Can you account for this ring?" asked the magistrate.

"No, sir. She left her home ten days ago, and I know nothing of her since."

A woman, in the garb of a Sister of Charity, had quietly entered the Court and heard the last words. Here was another dilemma. Would she be recognised if she spoke.

"Can't you persuade her to give an account of her proceedings, and confess how she came into possession of such a valuable trinket?"

He was allowed to approach her; but she covered her face with her hands, and sobbed out:

"Oh, it's no use; I'm bound not to tell."

Again the Sister rose, and again sat down. It was no use; if she spoke everything would be betrayed.

"We will deal with the case at once," said the magistrate. "We have no evidence that the girl stole it; she has been in confinement a week. We will therefore discharge her, as no one appears against her."

She was free. What would she do now?

Kate dared not approach her, for she had recognised Mr. Arthur as well as Jacob, pressing forward to take possession of the weeping Pattie, who was almost in a fainting condition with the shame and excitement through which she had passed.

"Oh, Pattie, Pattie! What trouble you have brought on us all," said Jacob.

Arthur never spoke to the unhappy girl, but hurried to fetch a cab, when they all drove off to an hotel, for Pattie was totally unfit for a day's journey. It was a relief to know she was safe in their possession; but oh, what could have happened to her during the three days' interim between leaving Broughton and being seized by the police? She remained as obstinate as ever; but there was a kind of dumb agony in her beautiful face, that pleaded for mercy.

"Don't add to her distress by questions," urged Arthur on the agitated brother. "She will explain all, I know she will. Make her go and lie down, speak gently, lovingly, and tell her we are not angry, only grieved."

Once in a room to herself, Pattie declined to

she speak to any one. But she walked up and down the floor, wondering what she should say to her father—to Mr. Arthur, to Gerrie; oh dear, oh dear! She could not invent, she had no fertile imagination, and she daren't speak the truth. If she spoke at all there would be nothing but plain facts forced from reluctant lips. Be false she would not for the sake of her dead mother—the mother who had loved her so, had taught her to say her simple prayers, had died blessing her—no. Pattie would still be true. The young men kindly left her to herself. They were both strangely moved, and neither expressed his feelings to the other, as they sat over their untasted meals, or paced the busy streets, neither noticing nor being noticed by the stranger throng. Arthur's thoughts can be better imagined than described. He determined, however, to give way to no conjectures, to indulge in no romantic explanations of the mysterious conduct of this poor, ignorant child. Behind the inexplicable there is always a grim reality; grim, painful, unbeautiful very often, but always as clear as the noonday, when the curtain is lifted.

The servant at the hotel was requested to attend upon the unhappy Pattie with as much assiduity as if she were a princess in disguise. When twilight had given place to the partial darkness of a midsummer night, she consented to take a cup of tea. This important fact was immediately communicated to the young gentleman below, for the damsel knew intuitively *which* was the gentleman, and *which* the country lad, as she also divined to which heart the news would be most welcome.

Arthur drew out his pocket-book and wrote a few lines. "Try and sleep calmly, dear Pattie; trust in my firm, unchangeable friendship." He folded the paper in a peculiar way and told the girl to give it to the young *person* upstairs. He knew she was no real young lady, either by birth or education, and he was quite sure she would never care to be called or pretend to be what she was not. Better an honest plebeian than a make-believe lady.

Pattie knew the handwriting; she read it quietly, but when the servant left her she kissed the bit of paper passionately in an agony of sorrow,

and put it under her pillow as the one bit of comfort left to her in this dreary world. Her beautiful face rested upon it all night, and no doubt it was as beneficial as any narcotic.

The next morning, she was led downstairs to a private sitting-room to confront her brother.

"Pattie!" he said, "you must come back with us. Do tell us how ever you came here, and why."

"Why, I came t' same way as you, by rail, and by mysen, and nobbody has aught to do with it. If anybody is mad about it at Broughton, I would leaver stop here. I'll not go home to have it thrown in my face all along."

"Tell us what made you come, then."

"It's not a bit of use aksing. I can't tell you, nor anybody. That ring was give to me, and I didn't want it, so I shall send it back to the young lady I have been stopping with. That's all I shall iver tell you."

Such a bare account would never satisfy his father. Jacob knew that, so he went and called Mr. Arthur to his sister, and Arthur came, calm and self-controlled.

To him, she said the same, only adding: "If you don't believe me, Mr. Arthur, I'd as leave die as live," and burst into uncontrollable sobs.

Arthur took her hand, himself terribly moved.

"Pattie, I believe what you have said; but there is a mystery behind which you refuse to let me penetrate. I will not blame you. I will try to think it is nothing of which you are ashamed, my poor child; but—but—— Oh! Pattie, why did you go?"

"You'll never forgive me, I know you won't, you, nor nobody else. I wish I was dead, I do."

"Can't you tell me anything more, Pattie? Did a gentleman give you that ring?"

"Yes, he wanted to marry me, and I couldn't abide him, so I ran away from the lady I was stopping with."

Couldn't abide him! There was some comfort for him in that statement.

She added:

"Oh, Mr. Arthur, you won't tell ever, will you?"

"Never, Pattie! God help you, for you'll find everybody else hard enough, I'm afraid."

"Save me from going back to Broughton, Mr. Arthur, will you? Find me a place. I can work, I can."

And Arthur determined to do as she wished; for he knew the cold looks, the sneers, the harshness of her parents, and the suspicions, well or ill founded, of other people, would surely be too fierce a storm for gentle Pattie Atkins.

Now, who could this gentleman be who had desired to marry Pattie? He seemed to have behaved honourably, and if it had not been for the affection he had awakened in her breast for himself, she might have been spared all these terrible entanglements, out of which he felt himself powerless to extricate her. There was no insane thing he was not prepared to do for that purpose, that the burden of disgrace might not lie so heavily on her young shoulders; but his wildest idea, when closely examined, appeared utterly impracticable. Should he marry her himself, his small earnings would be quite inadequate to keep her. He knew he must do

no such thing, nor even allude to his past folly. He bade her good night, begged her to trust in him to spare her all he could, and then quitted the hotel for the London streets. It was about ten o'clock. The shops were all closed, the din had ceased. He walked on, heedless where his footsteps led him. He reached the Marble Arch, and continued walking down Oxford Street. He became very hungry, and had but little money in his pocket. The restaurants looked bright and tempting; but the bills of fare in the windows proved too expensive. In the hope of finding some cheap coffee-house, he turned down first one bye-street, and then another. He found one at last, and hunger overcame the noxious, warm atmosphere of vanished dinners, reeking vegetables, steaming soups. At any rate, there was no odour among the various odours of gin or tobacco-smoke.

Arthur sat himself within one of the boxes capable of holding four persons closely packed. The cover was not particularly clean, and cruets exceedingly coarse. Newspapers were hanging

over the high backs of these seats, and Arthur seized one and read an account of poor Pattie in a London police court. It made his blood run hot and cold with pain and indignation. Why had not the fellow come forward like a man and cleared her character from all suspicion? Cowardly miscreant!

A young woman, fair and fat, with frizzy hair, came smilingly forward, soliciting orders.

"Eggs and bacon, and ginger-ale," were the young man's present requirements, and he was astonished to find with what relish he partook of them in such peculiar quarters.

Presently a man came and sat opposite to him, a tall, grim-looking fellow, wearing a low, soft hat. The two gazed in each other's face for a moment, when the new comer, instead of waiting for the attendant, slowly reared his big, ungainly figure, and walked out of the house.

"I have seen that man before, somewhere," thought Arthur; "but for the life of me I can't recall where; or, most likely, it was merely a resemblance to some other familiar face."

Yes, that man had also recognised Arthur, and, disappointed of his meal, immediately mounted his cab and drove off furiously.

Arthur sat on and on. He had nowhere else to go; and, worn out with previous wakeful nights, he fell asleep, so fast asleep that he had to be roused at closing time, when the place was already darkened and apparently quite empty. Arthur apologised, tipped the girl, and was walking out, when again he fancied he saw the face of that tall, grim-looking fellow pressed against the window as if in search of some one within. The light of the last remaining gaslight fell on his face; but in vain did Arthur try to recognise it. With some curiosity he stood outside a moment.

"Cab, sir?" said the man, stooping low as he spoke.

Arthur feeling a cab would be reckless extravagance, and quite unconscious how far his hotel might really be from the street, inquired the distance of the cabman, who, with great civility, but in curious terms, directed him the way to his destination.

No sooner was the young man's back turned,

than the cabman, chuckling to himself, said out loud :

“There’s a sell for you, my young gent,” and again mounting behind his hansom, drove off rapidly in the right direction, leaving Arthur to follow the wrong.

This gave him time.

Reaching the hotel, he called to a lad to hold his horse, passed within, and made inquiries for a girl of the name of Atkins.

“She’s gone to bed long since. I’ll give her a message in the morning.”

“But I must see her. I’m her father.” He showed the girl a sovereign, which would move almost any one.

“Is her brother in?”

“Yes ; but the young gentleman is out.”

“Mind you don’t let the lad see me.”

The domestic went up to Pattie’s door and told her a man wanted to see her, who said he was her father. In terrible trepidation Pattie said he might come up, for she felt she would rather see him before she went home. So the cabman entered her room, and she cried out :

“It’s you. You’ll be the death of me!”

“If you go back you’ll be the death of a good many, for I’m driven to desperation, and when I start, I’ll make an end of more nor one. You come with me.”

“Niver; I’d sooner die.” And her white, pinched face looked unflinchingly into his, and he knew he could as soon move a rock.

“Then yo’ tak th’ consequences.”

“I’ll never tell a word, though, come what may, as can harm you. I’ll never turn again you; I know you meant to be good to me, but you’ve nigh killed me.”

The man saw in her haggard face that she spoke the truth. His heart was touched.

“What are you going to do, then, my lass?”

“Go to sarvice. I could please anybody better than mother. Jacob will find me a place.”

The man looked perplexed, he scratched his head.

“I’ve got plenty o’ money,” he said. “Stop here a bit, and I’ll come again to-morrow night and take you to some safe quarters.”

They heard footsteps.

"Oh, pray go!" cried Pattie, beseechingly.

"Promise to stop, then?"

"I'll never promise nothing no more, niver, niver!"

"Is that Mr. Arthur a courting of you?"

"No, he isn't; so there!"

"Well, you trust me! I'll make you all right, and be here about this time to-morrow night."

And so he was; but Pattie Atkins had gone.

CHAPTER VII.

WE must go back a week.

The scene changes to a short, dull street off Oxford Street, in Modern Babylon — a dismal street. Several cabs stood in the centre harnessed to depressed-looking horses. There was, moreover, one hansom, draped with dark blue cloth, and to which was attached a horse altogether superior in appearance to his companions. The said horse was enjoying a feed of corn, while the proprietor of said hansom and the driver of said horse were both regaling their inner man in a private parlour of a public coffee-house. In the driver we at once recognise our acquaintance of the slouched hat.

“I mean to marry her and make an honest woman of her,” said the master. “I never dreamt of anything else. The only thing about it is I

can't arouse in her one atom of affection for myself; and it seems strange, too, unless she cares for somebody else, for she has no idea I am not all I appear to be, has she, Joe?"

"Not wi' my telling, that I'll swear," returned the man.

"Do you think young May or Matthews or any of those fellows have been courting her?"

"Not they, sir. The fact is she cares note about young men. She likes fine clothes and sich like, and if you dress her up and take her in a carriage she'll be all right—only you *must marry her* afore she's been in town a month. Catherine will take care of her till then and go to church with yer; there'll be no shirking that, sir. I know it's a lot to ask, but I durst ask no less."

"I tell you, man, I mean it. She shall be my wife; but I shan't tell the old folks, while they live, a word about it. They trust me as if I were Solomon in wisdom."

"Parents is that soft," replied the cab-driver. "Look what a dust David kicked up o'er his rascally son, and my mother is just as bad o'er me. But God will none lay all t' blame on me

for my deeds. Some one else 'll come in for a share."

Their conversation was earnest, with many intervals of total silence, as they made their hearty meal. The master had paid for privacy.

"Then, Joe, you'll meet the five o'clock train, and drive her straight to 33, Doncaster Road, Bayswater. Catherine promised to be there."

"And she will, sir; one may always depend on Kate, poor lass!"

"Suppose she never cares for me after marriage!" said the master.

"Have some trinkets ready, sir, and kind words. Why, she'll be as soft as silk. You'd better not turn up too soon."

"Another glass of beer, Joe?"

"Well, I shouldn't mind, sir. Whenever I expect to see Kate I gets an extra pint."

"Poor chap. You've had hard lines!"

"I have so. Many a time I've wished mysen at t' bottom of old Father Thames."

"Come, Joe, I won't talk with you about that. How do you like your lodgings?"

"London is a devil of a place for a country

chap like me, and all lodgin's hateful, sir. But for some folks it's doomed as they shall have note they do like i' this world, and summat worser beyond. It would be better for such if they'd niver been born."

This conversation by no means was cheerful to the expectant bridegroom.

"You can drive me down the Strand," he said, "I want to look up a fellow in the Temple."

He spoke in an unusually familiar strain to that big, skulking fellow, who, however, took no liberties with him, and not once allowed a smile to flit across his countenance.

They both rose, and Joe waited till his master had passed before him into the street, where he stood lighting his cigar, till the hansom was drawn up to the sloppy pavement.

Can anything be more miserable than the London streets on a rainy day, summer or winter? Joe thought not as he turned the corner into Oxford Street, where the fine pedestrian ladies held up their umbrellas in one hand and their ample skirts in the other, with ineffectual efforts to keep themselves unspotted; and the wretched

crossing-sweepers used their brushes vigorously, in the futile longings to earn their honest pennies. Ladies had no hands to spare to bestow alms, and gentlemen were in too great haste and too bad-tempered to notice them. Everywhere failure.

Safely ensconced in his own particular conveyance, which, besides paying Joe, brought him in many a golden guinea, the owner was unheedful of all that passed, his mind was full of this wild venture of his. With ladies young and old, fair and foul, rich and poor, all eager to share his name, he had set his heart on a simple, uneducated, country girl, who did not, perhaps was not even capable of returning his or any man's love. This mad act meant partial social ruin. For that he did not care a farthing, if only his parents might never learn his folly. Besides, he had money enough to defy the rules of society, and did he not know that the golden coin was as powerful in England as the American's almighty dollar over the broad Atlantic?

Now his only ambition, his only desire was to win the love of this beautiful uneducated child, for she was little more. With that he

would travel to other countries, and give her a superior education to most girls who had not the chance of going beyond their own shores. With such waking dreams time fled, and he could scarcely believe it when he found that he had arrived at his destination.

Punctually at five o'clock that identical hansom drove up to the Euston Station, and the driver, alighting, bade a lad near to hold his horse till he returned. The man's heart was restless—his conscience troubled. He had done many a blacker deed than this without compunction, but this seemed one of the hardest jobs he had ever had on hand.

The platform had not many passengers about. A porter told him that the train wasn't due for ten minutes, and was sometimes even later. Joe returned to his vehicle to see that all was right, and having satisfied himself as to that, went into the second-class refreshment room, and called for a glass of whisky. He felt he needed support and stimulus to carry him through the trying scenes he anticipated. The first glass he felt had refreshed him; a second would prove still

more useful. After that he lit his short pipe and paced the platform. He saw a train approaching, his heart gave a bound, but it rushed along till it neared the terminus, when it drew up gently to the platform.

“Where’s this train from?”

“Midland line. Express.”

That wasn’t her train; she was travelling by the parliamentary, which would give her ample time to weigh well the step she was taking. Would she come? He felt he would not wager half a farthing. There was nothing for it but to wait the slow train’s arrival. He stared sullenly enough as the fine folks, as they alighted, were greeted by friends or relatives, conducted to conveyances, attended by obsequious porters. He didn’t blame the porters, not he, for receiving gratuities contrary to rules. What right had such rules to be made, forcing the would-be generous to withhold their alms? Yet he was prouder of one of the finest porters on the platform, who attended to a poorly-dressed, feeble woman, apparently without even the ghost of a chance of receiving a tip. How carefully he carried her

bonnet-box, and handed her through some heaps of luggage. He watched them and found that he was mistaken; the mean-looking, poverty-stricken old lady gave the civil porter a tip, that brought the warm blood with a rush to his face, while his hand touched his cap with more respect, but not with more gentleness, than he had shown before.

"I say, governor, did the old lass tip yer?" asked Joe, out of pure curiosity.

The porter grinned from ear to ear.

"She did so," and he held up a bright half-crown.

"Well done. One 'ould think as though she had note to spare."

They both smiled.

"Clothes is deceitful," said the porter.

"Is this t' parliamentary?" asked Joe.

"Yes. Specting some one?"

"Yes; a young lass from t' country. Keep a look out, will yer? As handsome a lass as ever you seed."

The train drew up. Porters rushed with rather less zest to open the doors and assist

these passengers. They did their duty, perhaps, but no more, except at the first-class carriages.

Joe was so afraid of missing the object he was straining his eyes to see, that he never moved. She must pass that way, anyhow. She could not slip him where he stood.

Presently he saw the object he sought, standing, as if stranded, alone. She had on Miss Gerrie's last hat and jacket, and a cotton frock. He had seen the clothes before, or he could hardly have recognised in the ghastly face the blooming girl he had kissed last outside Eastwood. The generally dark rims round her eyes were deeper than ever, while the long, drooping lids were red and swollen. She looked round in disappointed wonderment. This London! This the mighty city, the metropolis of the world! She thought nothing much of it; the gloomy station made her shudder as if it were a prison. Oh that she could run back to Broughton and feel herself again a child. Ah! there he was! And she rushed towards him, leaving her bundle for any one that wanted it.

The man and girl kissed each other, he evidently delighted that she had kept her word.

"Oh! I've left my things," she exclaimed; and he went back, glad to leave her, dreading a scene by the look of her face.

To prevent this he grasped her arm, saying: "Quick, we are awfully late. Kate will be on the look out for an hour and more."

They stood at the hansom.

"Jump in; don't dally!" and he almost pushed her up the steps. Then he handed in the bundle, tipped the lad, remounted the box and drove off, leaving Pattie to gaze about her as well as the state of her swimming eyes would allow.

She could not have seen London under more inauspicious circumstances, and she made up her mind that she had come to die. It was some relief to see the green of the Park on the right hand side; but neither the shops nor the fine houses inspired her with any feeling of admiration.

Oh, where were Miss Gerrie and Mr. Arthur? What would they think of her when they found

that she had gone—gone, gone for ever, perhaps; and Jacob, and Reuben, and father, oh, and so many, many more. But Mr. Arthur, Mr. Arthur! Oh that she were down at the bottom of the deepest, blackest pit, under his protection and serving him.

“But I couldn’t, I’d promised, and t’ Bible tells you you must keep your promise, even to your own hindrance; and oh, besides, I have been forced, forced to do what I hated to do.”

She did not, she never had accustomed herself to endearing expressions, they were only for ladies and gentlemen; but her heart called loudly for relief in words that she could not trust herself to utter. She only knew she would rather have *died* for Mr. Arthur than *live* for the finest gentleman under the sun; she would rather treasure a piece of coal that *he* had dug out of the pit, than the brightest golden jewel another might offer. She covered her face with her coarse cotton handkerchief, so that “all them folks might not get a chance of staring at her,” and behind it she wept bitterly.

It was a long, busy street; the cab suddenly

paused; Pattie started and sighed, wiped her eyes, straightened her dress, and stood up to alight. She looked up at a sky of leaden hue, she looked down on the wet flagstones, to the right, to the left was nothing but houses. Oh, the monotony of that street! Every house the exact dreary facsimile of its neighbour. The man having opened the glass window before he alighted, bade her get out, and himself walked up the steps leading to the door and gave a loud rap. It was against the rule to leave the horse, even for a moment, but circumstances alter cases.

"Stop wi' t' horse," he cried out, suddenly, "just a minute," and Pattie was glad enough to do so.

She saw a tall figure standing in the doorway talking to her acquaintance, but did not know who it was. She had expected Sister Grey—Catherine as she had learnt to call her; but that was not her.

When the man returned, she said:

"Who is that?"

"Get along in; it's Sister Grey," and he laughed an exceedingly bitter laugh. "I shall

come in to-night." He jumped up to his place and was out of sight before Pattie had entered the hall.

The Catherine Grey we last saw now stood before pretty Pattie Atkins.

"You aren't Sister Grey," she exclaimed, as this apparent stranger drew her towards her and kissed her quite warmly.

"Yes, I used to be; now to you I am Kate."

"I know that well enough; but you ain't like her."

"No? Never mind. I used to disguise myself. This is what I really am; don't you like me as well?"

This surprise turned the current of the girl's thoughts.

"Yes, better," she said, after a moment's inspection, "and you look nicer. I don't like Cartholics."

"Then we shall be friends. I have a lot to teach you in a very short time. You'll learn better if you like me, shan't you? But first I have many questions to ask about dear, dear old Broughton."

"Aye, don't! you'll start me again; as it is I can scarcely bide."

Kate Grey looked attentively at Pattie, and there saw unmistakable signs of grief.

"Poor child! Come and let us have a cup of tea. These two rooms are ours."

Pattie stared round her. They were rooms of the well-known London daguerreotyped style. Lofty, bay-windowed, with folding doors into the bedroom at the back. The gas chandeliers were gilt, as were the mirror and pictures. It was comfortable, decidedly, not beautiful in any way. What town apartments are?

Kate touched the bell and ordered tea, and then, with feminine agility, divested Pattie of her outer garments, saying: "You will not require these again."

"But I have note else Miss Gerrie gave me; they are all laying on t' chair for what I know, yet."

"Ah, but to-morrow I am to order you a quantity of beautiful clothes from Marshall and Snellgroves, and turn you out a perfect little lady."

"That's more nor you can do."

"You must let me try; and begin at once by not saying note. If I were you, I would say as little as possible till I could speak like other people, except to me, for to me the old brogue is music.

"How's Aunt Rachel?" she continued.

"She bothers a good deal about you."

"Oh, I wish she wouldn't. And your grandmother?"

"She's middling; I should never have come but for her. Father and mother thinks as how I am with her now. I don't mind now I'm with you so much; but I ain't a going to marry nobbody, I've made up my mind to that there."

"Oh, that is nonsense; besides, it would be robbery now."

"Can't help that, I'd rather die."

"And make others die, too, I suppose?" said Sister Grey, whose face now wore an unusual sternness that almost terrified Pattie. "If you did die, you'd not be the first as gave their lives for their friends. Look what you would gain by marriage. Wealth, jewels, horses,

carriages, lands, and a handsome husband you love."

"I can't abide him."

"Really? a very good thing for you, so long as he loves you. A woman had better die, than marry a man that doesn't love her; but if he does, he is sure to gain something from a woman's tender heart, if it is only gratitude. Men know no mercy, no pity, no gratitude, unless they are in love, and their love is always short-lived and selfish. You be wise and marry the man who loves you, and as long as you don't care a farthing about him, he will hang on to you; but show him you love him, and by all that is sacred, he would sacrifice you to the devil himself for the next pretty face he met."

The woman spoke with vehement wrath, for she spoke from bitter experience.

Pattie was listening; but the advice to her seemed unnatural, impossible, incredible.

Mr. Arthur loved her; and, oh, she worshipped him! Had he guessed it? and would it make him hate her? If it would, it was kind of her to show it; but, if it did not, if it made him sad, and

wilder about her than before, what then? She had seen other young men who admired her more than she appreciated; but not one, not even the man who was to be her husband, she supposed, had shown what love meant, but Arthur.

“And I love the very ground he walks on, though I may never set eyes on him again.”

She kept on communing with herself. Suppose she had let him go with her to her grandmother's, what then? Nobody could kill love. Didn't the Book say it was stronger than the grave? No; if her father had beaten her to death; if Dr. Jewel had driven his son out of doors; if the young man she had promised to marry had shot him, the love would go on and on, for ever and ever, through all eternity.

Pattie had never read the Marriage Service—it did not interest her a bit—and felt sure she could not understand it if she did. She merely thought that her bridegroom would give her a ring, put it on her finger, and they would both have to say something after the parson. But now, alone in London (for Catherine had gone out to make some purchases after tea),

she thought that, when she had a chance, she would read it over, and see how far she would compromise herself by going through such a service. There was no Prayer-book among the few books that were fixed in a small shelf just above the cheffonier; so she had nothing to do but think. Miss Grey had hidden her small bundle far away under the bed, in utter contempt, and told Pattie to rest. Poor girl! she was far too agitated. Every step she heard, every bell that was rung (and where in London are not the bells incessantly on the go?), she feared might be the young man she was about to wed, who wanted to make her a lady.

“Just as if anything could make me like Miss Gerrie!” And this desire or promise of the young man made her feel unmitigated contempt for his want of common sense.

Mr. Arthur was not so soft. He loved her just as she was, and if she changed, and grew proud and high-minded, dressed fine, and talked affectedly, he would not like her half so well, she was sure.

“And Mr. Arthur? Why, Mr. Arthur’s worth

a dozen of him, whatever gold he may have i' t' bank, or whatever grand things he thinks of himsen."

Pattie had quite changed her mind about open waistcoats and swallow-tailed coats. Nothing was handsome but what he wore, what he looked—the man she loved. She was wretchedly unhappy, for the first time in her whole life. Burying her mother, after watching her suffer for months, was not half so bad as this sudden wrench from an unanticipated and so short-lived joy—such an intense moment of exquisite bliss, never to be forgotten while life lasted. As she sat thus lonely, separated by miles from Arthur, she felt her heart beat and her face glow with the remembrance of his words and manner. But she must keep it all to herself always, married or single. It would not be fair to tell of Mr. Arthur, who, of course, would have to marry a real lady—perhaps her own dear Miss Gerrie. That made the necessity all the greater for her to hold her tongue. Thus her thoughts went over and over the same ground, till Catherine returned with Pattie's "young man."

His face was all aglow, his hair shampooed with exquisite finish, his gloves, collar, tie, front, immaculate, his coat the newest fashion, and his delight manifest. But Pattie drew back more coldly than ever as she eyed him critically. In no particular did he remind her of Mr. Arthur, and she still felt she "couldn't abide him." Had he but one look of Mr. Arthur, she would have been more reconciled.

All attempts to find such resemblance proved abortive, and when he drew near, and insisted upon drawing her nearer to clasp her hand, to shower kisses upon that apathetic, though loveliest of faces, he was astonished at the expression it wore—a new one. The child had become a woman; she had lived and loved.

He felt intuitively that he stood in imminent danger of losing her altogether. There was absolute repulse in her manner. Alas! she felt herself at the edge of a precipice deeper than the deepest pit.

"Why, Pattie, you are quite ferocious, and I have been so looking forward to this meeting. Are you very tired?"

Sister Grey, as we must still sometimes call her, grown quite habituated to dissimulation, here emerged from the inner room, and answered for the speechless Pattie.

"Indeed, sir, I will guarantee she has scarcely slept for four-and-twenty hours. This has been a momentous step for her."

"Yes, indeed, a step on the first rung of the ladder to social eminence; for my Pattie would grace a palace."

Pattie had generally listened to his rhapsodies with negative indifference; now they sounded dreary and soulless words—painful mockery in comparison with the few articulations that had escaped from another's pent-up emotions.

She felt very thankful for Kate's suggestion, and, to plead for herself, found power of utterance.

"Oh, please go, sir, please let me sleep; I'm so—so tired. I wish that I was dead."

"Oh, come! That is hard on me; and I mean to make you the happiest of brides. Kiss me lovingly, obediently, for that, at least, is my due."

"Well, you'll not get it; so there."

"Oh, I will not ask too much at first; but be merciful and polite. I will be satisfied with just one or two kisses to-night, and then I'll let you go; but you must kiss me. Can I ask less, Miss Grey?"

He asked an impossibility, however. Pattie burst out into hysterical weeping, crying out: "Let me be, let me be!" He was forced to desist.

"Little goose! as shy as a fawn; but all the sweeter for that," and she escaped into the next room and banged the door.

"She will be better to-morrow, sir," said Kate. "If only the weather would change, she would be delighted to see the shops and to buy what pleased her fancy."

This was a hint, and grasped at once.

The young man immediately drew out two crisp five-pound notes.

"Make her spend these on any imaginable thing she likes. But I can't buy her love, I fear."

"Oh, it will go a long way to win it, sir, I am sure. Pattie goes into ecstasies over fine

clothes and jewellery. Leave her to me to reconcile herself to a lady's lot. I shall manage it better than you at first."

"Thanks, Miss Grey. Who can understand a woman like a woman?" So the bargain was struck.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was Thursday when Pattie arrived in London. Saturday found her completely metamorphosed. As she walked down Regent Street with Catherine Grey, lost in the wonders of the magnificent shops, no one could have imagined that fashionably but tastefully dressed young lady, whose lovely face, radiant with ineffable smiles of sweetness, whose glorious dark eyes gazed with such intent earnestness on the hitherto unseen marvels of that world-renowned street, could really be the Pattie Atkins of the gardener's cottage. Pattie loved decorations, art, beauty, and when robed to perfection, she had stood before the long mirrors of her own room, and in the various shops she had visited, and had found herself one of the most beautiful objects that could attract the eye of man or woman either.

“My! Fine feathers *do* make fine birds,” she had thought. She dared not express herself now in her natural dialect; so she remained very silent, only uttering monosyllabic exclamations of enthusiasm, wonder, or excitement, as the case might be.

They visited every shop of which the exhibits in the windows attracted Pattie’s covetousness.

“Thou shalt not covet” meant only that one must not covet what you cannot get; and therefore, to her, having no limits to her desires, that command became obsolete. Sister Grey took her into St. James’s Hall to an afternoon concert, and Pattie took out her own beautiful little watch given to her by her adorer, and felt proud to exhibit it as she timed each piece. Her love of music was very real; but the soft, slow, classical movements chased away all her cheerfulness, and made her great, luminous eyes fill with tears. Kate dreaded anything that could excite her sensibility, and observing the effect of that style of music on the nerves of the most troublesome charge she had ever undertaken, she hurried her to other scenes.

Just outside the Hall doors stood a blind man, thin, haggard, more wretched-looking than any one in Broughton, and before him Pattie stood in utter astonishment.

"Oh! poor man!" she cried, "are there poor folks in London, too, where everything looks so grand!"

Strangely incongruous did this poor, blind beggar appear to Pattie, in this city of magnificence.

"I shall give him some of this money. I've got all I want," and pulling out her dainty purse, she examined its contents.

"Don't be too silly, Pattie," said the wiser Kate, seeing that the girl was about to give him all she had.

"How much, then?" replied Pattie, looking up to Sister Grey, as to a being of superior wisdom.

"A shilling will be a godsend to him, and he can make it go farther here than in the country."

Pattie submitted, and dropped a shilling into the outstretched hand, and quite blushed at the profuse thanks she received, with invocations on all the saints to bless her henceforward.

On Sunday, Pattie's young gentleman called to

escort her to Westminster Abbey in his own hansom.

Joe nodded in astounded admiration to the beautiful, transformed, little apparition, and she coloured with pleasure for an old acquaintance to see her in all her glory. Catherine went elsewhere.

Pattie was too full of her own appearance to think of her companion, nor did she entertain one iota of gratitude towards him for having conferred upon her so many unasked-for mercies. In fact, she had made up her mind that it was of no use saying anything to him yet awhile. She must wait and see if, under silken garments, she could really be changed into a young lady. She did feel a little bit different, she acknowledged, so finely attired than even in Miss Gerrie's left-off garments ; but the society of this fine gentleman at her side still made her feel almost sick, and his open admiration of her beauty, his worship of her person, gave her a poorer and poorer opinion of the man.

He ventured to clasp her hand in the cab.

"Give over ! Let me be !" was all she deigned to say.

"It is your turn to be hard now," he said; "by-and-by you will be my obedient little wife, and I shall be so proud of you, Pattie."

"So long as I don't talk," replied practical Pattie, "you aren't going to turn me to waxwork, are you? I'm not dead yet, sir."

Her words, and the harsh manner she ejaculated rather than spoke them, jarred upon his nerves terribly.

"Our banns are out this morning, child. I want you to be less waxwork, more lifelike. I want you to try and talk as we talk here, not as they do in the country. Such a sweet mouth should bring forth only sweetness."

"You're so soft," replied Pattie, "or else——"

"Or else what? Would you try and please me better if I loved you less?"

"More than likely," she replied. "I don't like always bein' complimented on my mouth and eyes, and sichlike. When I grows older, like my mother was, and loses my good looks, you'd care note about me."

"Shouldn't I? You don't know me. I love you for yourself, my sweet country-blossom."

“What is myself?”

Now this is what a Manchester Arab would call a poser, and this young gentleman himself was nonplussed.

“Why, Pattie, you are quite philosophic! You are *you*, and nobody else, and I am myself, and no one else.”

“I wish you was!” was the unexpected and uncomplimentary answer.

This was worse still. Who on earth did she wish him to be, would she kindly tell him?

“Niver i’ this world!” was the decided reply. “I wish you’d either talk a-summat worth hearing or be still, sir!” she added, turning away her beautiful face, over which drooped the tip of an immense white ostrich-feather, resting on her dark auburn hair, still neatly put behind her ears, and plaited into a magnificent roll, which hung down her back. Kate had fastened it with a crimson bow. He looked at her admiringly, but with evident disappointment, and began to despair of ever making a favourable impression on a girl who plainly told him to his face, that she wished he were some one else.

He was restored to his usual complacence, however, when he led her up the crowded aisles of the old Abbey. First one and then another noticed the young couple as they slowly made their way. They found a seat not far from the lectern, where they could plainly see the white-robed choristers, and hear every word of the service. White surplices in those days were less common than now, being confined chiefly to the Cathedrals and Abbeys. To Pattie the scene was overpoweringly impressive, almost excelling, in beauty and solemnity, the future heaven of her imagination. The intoning made to her the service almost unintelligible, which merely enhanced the spiritualism of the whole scene; and the soft harmony of the "Amens" fell on her ears like tones from the land whither her mother had gone. Yet this was still the very world in which she dwelt. She was not dead, but alive; and though the boys looked like angels, and the solemn organ-strains sounded like the music of the spheres, here was a common herd enough around her, with substantial bodies and woollen garments, just as they had on in the streets; and as her eyes rested upon clothes, her

delusions died away. As the intoning became more familiar to her, the words were again distinguishable ; and, shutting her eyes to all surrounding objects, she tried to fancy that Mr. Arthur, perhaps, was hearing these same words, praying these same prayers—and Miss Gerrie too, and all, all the dear, loved people in simple Broughton Church.

“Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us,” died away softer and softer, filling the buried eyes with hot, scalding tears. The Lord’s Prayer, intoned through by the clergy and choir, sounded very meaningless after the solemn way in which the Rector had been accustomed to read it ; but the versicles again entranced her, and the almost whispered echoing down the aisles, and up to the vaulted roof, of the oft-repeated words :

“O Lord, make clean our hearts within us, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from us,” fell slower and slower, softer and softer, till all sound died away into perfect silence. Pattie almost sobbed.

She had listened attentively to the reading of the first lesson. It was a subject with which she

was well acquainted, it told of old Eli's troubles, and the call of little Samuel. How she envied him. Oh that she could hear a voice, clear and distinct from heaven itself, how gladly would she, too, reply, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Her life was full of perplexity and sorrow; she could not decide which way to take.

In the middle of the prayers, where an anthem or hymn may be sung, the vast congregation rose to their feet, and the organ played over the very tune she had been practising last in dear old Broughton Church.

"Far from my heavenly home," and, in retrospection, that old sacred edifice seemed heaven itself, and she so far away. Had she not verily and indeed strayed far from home, and was she not ready to faint? Great drops filled the beautiful eyes, obliterating the words from her sight though she gazed intently upon the page, so intently indeed, that she did not see the preacher conducted by the vergier, with his mace, to the pulpit steps, and was quite unprepared to hear a strange voice, almost close to her, utter in natural tones the words

of the Collect: "O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding," etc.

Pattie lifted up her tearful eyes in surprise. The people's heads were all bowed, the afternoon sun was streaming through the painted windows; but in a second her sight rested on the figure of the preacher in the dark old oaken pulpit, where the holiest, most eloquent men for centuries past, have held their hearers spell-bound Sunday after Sunday. This little country girl was no less impressed as she listened to the deep-toned voice, the clearly articulated words, that fell so distinctly on her ears.

The preacher was a tall, massive figure, in a white surplice and scarlet hood. Pattie, unused to such a vestment, imagined him to be at least a bishop. His hair was abundant, but perfectly white. His forehead and dark, earnest eyes bespoke intellect of the highest order, his face was very pale, and his features, without the chiselled perfection of Reginald Jewel's, were set on a true, aristocratic mould.

The Collect was long, but Pattie did not remove

her eyes from his face, longing to hear a direct message to her troubled heart.

The preacher's text struck her as being meant for her expressly. It was the stern rebuke of Peter to Simon the Sorcerer: "Thy money perish with thee." This man must be a prophet. Eagerly she continued to scan his countenance and drank in his every word, as he reminded his congregation of the undue value set upon wealth by the world at large, how widely it opens the doors of hospitality, blots out all transgressions and covers a multitude of sins. He did not disparage the manifest advantages of money, but tried to impress his hearers with the fact that the best gifts no gold can purchase either for prince or beggar. He reminded them how little value was set upon these priceless treasures, health, intellect, love, peace of mind, all of inestimable value, without which money is but of little worth. There was little in that sermon that was beyond the capacity even of Pattie Atkins. Though as yet never an invalid, she had watched her mother die, and had seen how useless were the most tempting dainties sent from the Hall kitchen to procure her ease or enjoyment.

Moreover, in her own person she could understand how the rich might long for mental capacity when libraries were filled from floor to ceiling with handsomely-bound volumes, not one which could procure an hour's amusement to their owners, unless endowed with the inestimable gift of mental power to grasp their hidden worth; she also could understand how all the music of the Abbey itself would be entirely lost upon some people who could not distinguish one tune from another. And what would the most elaborate paintings and sculpture be to those who had not eyes to see? All this Pattie could understand. But when the preacher spoke of love, that mysterious sentiment of the human mind that binds soul to soul, and of the infinite bliss enjoyed by those capable of experiencing its holy influence, she felt her mind expand in sympathy with that subject.

"We do not love another for his possessions; but for what *he is*, or what we believe him to be," said the preacher. "Money cannot buy love, though often heart and soul, beauty and accomplishments are sacrificed before its unholy altar in matrimony. No, all the wealth of Egypt could

not buy one ounce of love, or the happiness that God alone can give to the human heart.

“Nor can money buy a quiet conscience, when lies and falsehood, selfishness and wrong-doings have disturbed its calm, making daylight fearsome and night hideous with bitter memory. No money can allay its agony—no money give a sense of sin pardoned, or the peace of God which passeth all understanding.”

Again he entreated his hearers to cultivate the best gifts, the imperishable, everlasting blessings that God has bestowed indiscriminately among all classes of people—blessings that may be enjoyed by rich and poor alike wherever distributed.

“And shall I forfeit all this?” thought Pattie. “Shall I sell myself to this man for any causes? I care naught for his money, and not even for Joe dare I lose my peace of mind by telling lies.”

These fine clothes she felt only made her vain and proud, only made her heart grow dirtier and dirtier, puffing itself up with thoughts of folly, and if she stopped in London, the Holy Spirit, if ever He had been her guest, would

leave her altogether in that big city, so far away from Miss Gerrie, Mr. Arthur, from Sunday-school, and from her mother's quiet grave under the old yew-tree.

After the sermon the prayers were continued, when a sweet anthem was sung, chiefly by an angel-looking boy, with the voice of a seraph.

It was a tear-stained face that Pattie revealed to her wealthy lover when the last "Amen" had died away; but a face whose expression had changed from that of rapt attention into the apathetic look it was wont to wear in the little gallery of Broughton Church, where her feelings had lain so dormant because her ideas had scarcely been awakened, or her mental faculties aroused. As she returned in spirit to her old indifference, when she looked at him, the expression her face assumed was companion to her thoughts.

Her lover gazed at her, and thought of her only; but he might have left her side and have gone out into the street, she would have been as perfectly unconscious of his exit as of his presence during the entire service.

Only when it was quite over, the final blessing intoned in its usual monotony, did Pattie awaken to a sense of her own identity, and of that of her companion.

"Oh, dear a me!" she exclaimed, in a whisper. "It's all over, then?"

"Yes; but look! there go the choristers." They did not come their way, and the crowd would not permit them to see more, so they went into Poets' Corner, and the young man tried to impress his ignorant darling with the solemnity and glory of that temple of fame.

Pattie had no enthusiasm for genius, and was not willing to learn anything from her self-constituted tutor.

"Let's go home," was all she said. Her soul had been already stirred beyond its wont, and she felt heart-weary and exhausted.

Left alone in the evening, at her own particular desire, she opened a Prayer-book with red edges, beautifully bound in real ivory, that she had fancied and bought especially for the study of the Marriage Service. Her banns had been read that morning in the parish church of that

street, and at St. Pancras, which was the parish church of her future bridegroom. She had occasionally heard them read in Broughton Church, and imagined that somehow folks were almost wed after that solemn declaration. And now what more had she to do or say with the man who paid so well for her, and whom she "couldn't abide"? She would see for herself. She found the place. How black and close the reading looked, and such a lot of it! It was worse than the Catechism, which she detested with as much vehemence as she could anything inanimate.

After the banns, the service began with "dearly beloved." She supposed that was the same exhortation she had heard, without any attention, Sunday after Sunday ever since she could toddle. She wasn't going to bother herself about that. Then the reading in italics was quite beyond her powers to decipher.

"M. Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all other,

keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?

“The man shall answer, ‘I will.’

“So he may,” muttered Pattie. “‘M.’ meant man. Here’s ‘N.’; what does that stand for?

“Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband, to live together, after God’s ordinance, in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honour, and keep him, in sickness and health, and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?

“That’s what the parson will say to me, then,” thought Pattie. “It’s plain enough. Wilt thou obey him? serve him? love him? How could I when I can’t abide him? Honour him? What does that mean—think the world on him, as I do of Mr. Arthur, feel as if I weren’t worthy to wipe his shoes? My! not of him—how could I? Keep him in sickness and in health—perhaps I might; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only to him as long as ye both shall live. That I couldn’t—I couldn’t. Why, he’d be worse than a step-mother—al’ays at my heels. Whatever should I

do? and me al'ays a-hankering, al'ays a-longing to be rid of him—as I do now—even for five minutes. I should only long to go to my mother worse nor ever; I'd rather drown myself. And the service is already begun in t' church, too—ever such a big, grand place. Whatever comes next?

“Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?”

“How do I know? unless it be Joe!” she ejaculated. “And now, then, how does it go on?”

“I, M., take thee, N., to my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part.

“My word! Ain't that there awful for any poor folks to have to say afore the parson and all i' t' church? Well, he could say it right enough, and mean it, an' all; but what must I say?”

“I, M., Pattie (that's me), take thee, N. (that's him) to my wedded husband (how could I?), to have and to hold (never!), for better for worse

(that would depend), for richer for poorer (either way would be the same to me), in sickness and in health, to love, to cherish, and to obey, till death us do part (how awful! That's worse and worse). There! I'll read no more; it's not a bit o' use. I hate lies, and the father on 'em. Mother always telled me never to tell stories, and I durst not stand up i' t' church and tell such a pack all at once, afore such a lot of folks. It would be better to tell 'em anywheer than i' God's own house; such lies is only fit for t' public-house, mixed up wi' a few oaths. I don't love him, so there; I wouldn't obey him, either, and I should be sure to wish him dead or mysen. And now, whatever I'm to do wi' all these fine clothes, and get out of this fine place, is more nor I can tell; but do it I will, as sure as my name is Pattie. I wonder as how folks aren't afraid of that marrying business; it fair scares me."

Pattie shut up her Prayer-book. She had quite done with it, and never again meant to turn over its pages. She opened the wardrobe, and there saw her bundle that she had entreated she might

keep. It contained a coarse change of under-clothing and a clean print frock. It was a beautiful Sabbath evening, and she was within a stone's throw of Kensington Gardens, where she had walked about like a hen in peacock's feathers that very day, with her new companions, indulging in feelings of natural pride at the beauties of her person. She had thoroughly enjoyed the appearance of her buttoned, high-heeled boots, her black silk stockings, her beautiful fashionable gown and summer mantle; had toyed with her fairly white hands, tightly encased in buttoned kid gloves, and altogether experienced something of the pleasurable gratification young ladies *do* feel when really well dressed. She dwelt with pride on that silent walk; for she had kept silence, not to disturb the feelings of admiration forced upon the scarcely willing lady friend and intoxicated lover. It was pleasant to excel others, even in appearance, and she had given loose reins to its gratification.

Now her hands were tremulous; the diamond, glistening in its gold circlet on her finger, dazzled her eyes. It was so beautiful; it did so set off

her fast whitening hands. She wished some one else had given it to her but him. It seemed to fit her tighter; it wouldn't come off. And yet it must, and quick too; for she was not going to stop in that place any longer—not if she could help it. It didn't matter what else happened, so long as she was not forced to utter a pack of lies in the very presence of a truth-exacting God. She daren't do it. She would not; and the generally calm Pattie felt stirred within her the strength of a youthful martyr.

Oh, what a lot of buttons there were to those long kid boots! In her exceeding haste she broke off more than one. Then she changed everything she had on, even to the brown, knitted stockings her poor dead mother had knitted for her while she was laid up.

"These will help my feet along. I know," she said, "whoever may scold me, mother won't. She wouldn't have me tell no lies ever for anybody living."

These were her low-heeled, strong, leather boots. How heavy they seemed that hot day! But the checked print was cool and clean enough;

and Miss Gerrie's hat and jacket were as much loved as ever because they were hers. Now she was once again Pattie Atkins. She had not been Miss Atkins a week yet, and she would take care she never was such an unnatural individual again. Oh, if she could only get clear off before the return of her gaolers! Her purse! Yes; she must take some money, or how could she ever reach Broughton? Good-bye, Miss Atkins!

She had still on that beautiful diamond ring. She pulled and tugged at it, but her hand was swollen with the heat, and trembled with excitement. It would not stir.

There, on the dressing-table, lay that gem of a watch. Should she take it? Her very soul cried out for it, for she loved the beautiful thing.

"Oh, no, no; I won't have you! You aren't mine; you're for *his* wife—and I ain't a-going to be her—so good-bye!" And she pressed it to her lips. "You're the hardest to leave of all," she said, "that you are!—which proves what a fool I am. But this 'ere ring won't come off. When it does—and I'll go to t' blacksmith afore it shan't—I'll send it back. Ah! I sees 'em coming down

t' street — both of 'em. They'll catch me, and watch me like a cat watches a mouse, they will."

They were still a long way off. Pattie sped downstairs, out of the street-door, looked up once again to measure the distance between her and her gaolers, and dashed down the street, first to the right, then to the left—anywhere, to escape from those who had never seen her and therefore did not follow.

CHAPTER IX.

REGINALD JEWEL was at the Rectory for a month's vacation. He was now a full-fledged deacon. He never betrayed with what emotions he had cast aside his strong cloth tweeds of gray and brown, his many-coloured ties, his light straw hats, for the fine black cloth, the pure white necktie, and the warm, soft, clerical hat.

Whether pain or pleasure, pride or humility, preponderated we cannot tell as he assumed these outward visible signs of the inward spiritual grace. But he wore them with calm dignity. No one ever saw him sprawling on the bright green lawn, face upwards, or with hands upholding his head as he perused some book. This was one of Arthur's favourite attitudes. No ; Reginald had always worn an air of reserve and self-control. He was determined to avoid the appearance of any laxity of

mind or body, to keep himself and all his inclinations, either for pleasure or ease, entirely in subjection. He looked almost like a marble statue in the pulpit—so pure, so chaste, and spotless. His intonation was perfect, his voice beautifully clear and soft. He certainly preached with more authority than pathos, was more didactic than fervent; but people believed he lived up to his standard, and they heard him gladly. They admired him, and always stood in respectful awe of Mr. Regie, but they would not lay down their lives for him as they would for the younger brother who dwelt among them—he who sympathised with them because he knew them all individually, and understood their trials, their temptations, their falls, and renewed attempts. Mr. Regie expected too much circumspection in outward conduct, Mr. Arthur read their hearts. Gerrie alone, in her turn, read Reginald's heart. To her his voice and manner softened wonderfully. She knew his heart was a great deal softer than it appeared, and that he rather despised than gloried in his own intense refinement and love of culture.

Vulgarity, coarseness, ugliness, pained him ex-

quisitely. Other people despised such, sometimes laughed at sights, which to him were actual torment. He would be ashamed to express the absolute loathing he felt towards things repulsive, however innocently so; and he was not sufficiently absorbed in any mental labour to become indifferent, because almost unconscious, of the unpleasant. Arthur really saw farther than Reginald. He had a deeper grasp of mind; he sought into causes rather than effects. The blackened faces, the horny hands, the stooping, slouching gait of the working men was the result of labour on behalf of others—to be deplored, never despised. The children of the toilers were quite as pretty as those of the more refined rich. It is the effect of labour that mars them as they grow older, that produces the ungainly figure, the stooping shoulders, the awkward step. God forbid he should despise them for the unavoidable effects of doing their duty! It was a simple daily tragedy to him to find, by association with his less fortunate fellows, how capable they were of better things beyond their grasp.

“I think every clergyman should dispense,

among his people, all his own attainments," he said to Reginald—"teach them, ungrudgingly, everything he has ever learnt himself of beauty and culture, manners, customs, science, as far as possible. I would give lectures and instruction on every imaginable subject that could help to raise our brother-man up to our level. Of all classes of men in this Christian country, the parson ought to be the least exclusive."

"Common people are a great deal happier left alone," replied Reginald. "Knowing nothing of the customs and habits of good society, they are satisfied to be coarse and vulgar as they herd together. Teach them to do as we do, and where would be the difference?"

"Only the difference that the Almighty has made between man and man, which is infinite. There are born poets, authors, actors, mechanics, artists, there are born brutish, sensual, coarse creatures, so ingrained to the backbone. God has made His own nobles and plebeians, and they are scattered pell-mell over the face of the earth. Give all a chance, they would be better distinguished, and that ought to be done."

"Arthur, you are a thorough Radical, a democrat."

"Nothing of the sort, I am a Christian. The exclusive clergy are so unlike their Master, that I fear even, if He came again, He would scarcely find a home among them in this country. He might among the missionaries in some of our colonies, for they associate much more familiarly, even with the savage natives, than do the clergy with many of their fellow white men. Don't you think, Regie, that Christ's life was even more wonderful than His death? That He lived for us seems so little considered, I mean that He lived so long the life of humiliation, to teach us *how* to live, for how rarely is even the attempt made so to do."

"Modern life is so different," said Regie, dreamily. "It would be impossible to do as He did."

"And who has made it so impossible, but His professed followers? Oh, the inconsistency of it!"

"We know Christ sat down to table with the very scum of society; but we must remember

that to Him there was no contamination, as there is to us."

"I maintain that *with* Him—for surely we should have His presence—we need fear no contamination; at any rate, in the endeavour to follow Him, we must risk even that. I verily believe you parsons imagine you can improve upon His teaching and example, by acting as you consider necessary to the wants of the times."

"No, no, Arthur. God keep us from such audacious presumption as that."

But after such arguments, the brothers were invariably better friends than ever. One thing annoyed Reginald more than all, and that was the way in which Gerrie coincided with every one of Arthur's opinions, as of course did Jessie, who carried them into effect, too, as much as possible.

She had now a new fad. She had become tired of trying to put the rudiments of Latin into Vernon, and Gerrie had quite overtaken her in all her acquirements, so Jessie was resigning her daily post at the Hall. The Squire was gaining a great influence over her; a painful influence,

but not an evil one. She was in constant uneasiness because he varied so in manner. She never knew how he would greet her; with a smile or a frown; with a warm clasp of the hand or a passing nod; and he had the power, which he used unduly, of making her joyful or sad. That he had this power was a cause of secret delight to him; he longed to strengthen it, so that his smile might brighten her life, his presence become all-in-all to her; that without it she would fade and wither. Unless she loved him with the same intensity as he loved her, he knew she would never become his bride; for there were passages in his life that she must learn, and only such a passion as his could overlook. Waiting, then, for this love to deepen that he had aroused, he tormented and enthralled his victim alternately.

Laura Jewel had suddenly become a person of much greater importance than her sister, for she was the affianced bride of John Roberts, Esq., of the Lodge, Broughton; the envied of all the young ladies in the neighbourhood. We have said little about her hitherto; the fact is she was a practical young lady who would never have a

romantic history ; for if romance approached her it would at once change into commonplace. She never imagined. Facts were all plain facts to her. With cause and effect, with the hidden inner workings of the soul, she had nothing to do. She was not troubled with the smallest particle of spiritual insight, and was therefore one of the fortunate ones of the earth.

John Roberts was good-looking, young, immensely rich, and had asked her to be his wife. *Why* he had chosen her was a question beneath her consideration. As he had done so, she gloried in her new, most enviable position.

"Jessie, I shall be so rich, you need not trouble yourself about *your* future. Of course, *my* sister will be introduced into the very cream of society, and soon find a wealthy partner, unless, dear, you marry the still handsome father of your beloved Gerrie. It would not be so very unsuitable, after all."

It was far from pleasant to Jessie to be patronised by her younger sister. Laura was a tall, fine girl, fair and phlegmatic, incapable of enthusiasm on any subject, and as unlike Jessie

as it was possible to be. She was occasionally droll, but rarely witty. Her best jokes were reserved for her brothers when they were discussing political, social, or religious questions, all of which she turned into ridicule as well as she was able. To be useful was not her aim; to make every one else of use to her superior person *was*. She was now more than ever conscious of her importance in the world, and made strong efforts to arouse a sense of it in the minds of others.

John Roberts seemed to suit her admirably. He did not require much demonstration of her attachment, any more than he evinced the same. Their two practical heads, when blended together, would make a very practical whole. Intensity of feeling was not in their line apparently. The world was before them—real, tangible, commonplace—and they were fit inhabitants of this lower sphere. Mr. and Mrs. Roberts were gratified that their only son and heir had so far given in to their desires. They might have chosen a more brilliant match for him; but they had no real cause for complaint, and the visits backwards and forwards

between the Lodge and the Rectory were very frequent.

Pattie Atkins had reappeared no more in Broughton, and tongues had found another subject for discussion, so that she was rarely mentioned. But there were those in the village with whom she was present in mind daily, if not hourly.

Jacob was advancing in every way, and the friendship between him and Arthur was firmly cemented, though of their visit to London, and indeed of any allusion to Pattie, they maintained a strict silence.

Arthur had become almost as grave as his brother, only his gravity was a very different thing. His hearty laugh was seldom heard, his merry song and his clear, shrill whistle were now quite silenced. His religious feelings had deepened, his sympathy for the poor had strengthened, and his efforts for alleviating their many distresses were increasing. He continued his lectures, his night-schools, his visits to their humble homes; spoke to them as brother men, urged on them personal courtesy to each other—contentment, self-culture. If they in-

vited him to partake with them some humble meal, he never refused, that they might see how he behaved at table, and learn to do the same. At any rate, he put his teaching into practice; he could not do more than prove it *could* be done than by doing it.

Now Jessie wanted to act in the same unaccountable way. She would be certificated, and teach all the village children instead of the few favoured ones, and teach them the very best way she could, too.

Every one objected; and at last her parents *demand*ed that not in Broughton, at any rate, should she so demean herself.

"Exalt herself, rather!" exclaimed Arthur, warmly.

But Jessie waited, and duly considered all points of the subject. Until Laura was finally married, she would find employment enough in superintending her sister's *trousseau*, and other matters concerning the wedding.

"Happy is the bride that the sun shines on," says the old proverb; and brilliantly the sun shone, that auspicious morn in August, on ivied tower,

the white headstones, the green mounds, the tall elm-trees, and the darker elders of the old churchyard. The school-children strewed flowers on the path leading to the old church where the bridal party slowly passed after the service, followed by most of the villagers, to the Rectory, some few yards away. Gerrie looked the sweetest of bridesmaids, and Jessie the most agitated. Miss Roberts presented a more brilliant appearance than each of them as she leant on Reginald's arm, who had refused to perform any part of the service. She was very tall, and brilliant in colour—eyes, hair, complexion, all strikingly fair and bright. Proud and happy she felt on Reginald's arm—her secret idol for years.

Arthur led Gerrie; but his face was set and white, with lines of care and sorrow on it that had no right there.

The Squire also was present, and many other characters we have not, and are not going to introduce to our readers. Breakfast over, the bride and bridegroom departed for their honeymoon, and, an hour later, Arthur, too, was packing his small portmanteau for a journey south.

He called Jessie.

"My dear Jess," he said, with a voice husky from emotion, "I am called from home. I must go at once. Try to turn the conversation if any one expresses surprise at my absence, and explain to father and mother that I was obliged to go. They may imagine it is something to do with my examination ; and I shall not forget to make use of any London advantages. More you need not know. Prevent what inquiry you can."

"Oh, Arthur! There is something serious behind this, dear! I know there is, some hidden grief."

"God alone knows how bitter," answered the poor lad. "Pray for me, Jessie, that is all you *can* do."

She threw her bare, white arms round his neck in a passion of sorrow. He kissed her tenderly. There was altogether a solemnised look on his face that filled her with forebodings, and the tenderness of his manner, the huskiness of his voice, the pallor of his countenance terrified her.

"Good-bye, Jessie, darling."

“Not good-bye, Arthur; good-day, that is all. We shall have you back some early to-morrow.” But to her it was indeed good-bye.

He made no reply; seizing his portmanteau, he disappeared down the back staircase, out of the back door, across the vacated yard, and down to Lutterfield Station. He walked rapidly, looking neither to right nor left, and soon was whirled with railway speed to the city of extremes, and there we must leave him, with Jacob for companion, whom he found patiently waiting on the platform.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Pattie told Arthur that she had had an unwelcome visitor, who threatened to call again the next evening and to carry her off, he decided to remove her at once into other quarters.

He knew a couple of old spinsters, who let apartments in the neighbourhood of Euston Square, having himself lodged with them. Hither he took Pattie, and left her in their charge, entreating all kind attention for her, promising them that she would eventually turn out a most trustworthy help for them. They were a couple of homely old grumblers, always dressed in rusty black, turning green with age, with black caps perched upon their iron-gray hair, their long, melancholy faces living evidence of the desolation of their dreary lives.

Pattie longed for Catherine Grey, and told

Arthur so, and he promised to allow her to come and see her as soon as all danger from molestation from an unwelcome suitor had passed. Seeing how anxious Pattie was that his name should not be revealed, Arthur made no further inquiries. He was afraid she would find her life terribly monotonous; but he knew no better, nor indeed, any other refuge. These spinsters were, at any rate, harmless, and could never reproach the girl on subjects unknown to them. He did not correspond with her, but read every letter received by Jacob, who considered him her benefactor; but she was rarely out of his mind waking or sleeping. She made no complaints, and wrote in quite a cheerful tone when she at last gave an account of a visit from Sister Grey.

So some months passed by without one glimpse of a face that had once been as the apple of his eye; but the very morning of his sister's wedding he received a note in a weak, illiterate, female hand, entreating him to come at once to Grove Street, as his little friend was at the point of death.

This, then, made him take such a sad farewell

of Jessie, for he felt that, if she died, he must cry with Job: "What good is my life to me?"

He reached the dismal street, and the still more dismal house. Pattie lay on a little iron bedstead on the ground-floor back. A slatternly maid admitted him at once without any to do. High brick walls were the only out-look from the grimy window with the sooty blinds. The room was terribly close, for the old ladies thought the adulterated air of the London atmosphere was better kept outside. The old, faded carpet had the appearance of never having been swept since it was put down. What a contrast with the sweet country air, and spotless cleanliness of her old home.

Pattie was fast asleep, and Arthur sat down and covered his face with his hands, for he could plainly see the shadow of the dread, mysterious leveller approaching, slowly but surely.

Jacob stood for a moment at the foot of the bed, and then, unable to control his emotion, he left the room.

She still slept on, unmindful of the silent,

unutterable sorrow of the object of her worship. He was learning wonderful self-mastery. No sound, no sigh escaped his firmly-closed lips, as he sat so close to her, listening to every laboured, hard-drawn breath. He had no idea how near grim death might be. There was a flush on her wasted cheek, brighter than was its wonted hue in health; but the low, pale brow was clammy, the dark iris of her wondrous eyes almost penetrated through the semi-transparent eyelids, which seemed too weary to close entirely. The delicate nostril wore a pinched look, that told of suffering, and the beautiful lips were partially opened upon the white, even teeth. A faded flower, indeed; but more beautiful in its early decay than in its feeble attempts to reach the maturity denied in such an uncongenial climate to such tender blossoms.

She was surely withering like the green herb never to become a seared brown leaf. Better, sweeter so, more compatible for one with so delicate an organisation, than to be stranded, blighted, and alone in such a cruel world. And yet Arthur felt to have saved her he would have sheltered her, even if he had to forsake all others—

father, mother, sister, friends, and, hardest of all, Reginald, whose intense pride of birth and love of culture, he feared, could never have tolerated such a connection.

Presently the weary sufferer threw her arms up and gave an almost suffocating gasp.

"Pattie, my dear Pattie!" whispered the watcher.

"Oh, Mr. Arthur, Mr. Arthur! have you come to take me up the green lanes, to daisy meadow? Oh, I do want to smell the hay, and hear the birds sing, and see the cattle, oh, so bad! worse nor aught else. I'm dying o' London, I am, sir, for sure. Ain't it an awful place?"

"Poor Pattie! you must get stronger, and then, indeed, I will take you anywhere."

And he took the feverish little hand in his strong palm, and looked upon it more passionately than any one on earth could have guessed from that outward calm.

"Will you? You *are* good, oh, so good, better nor anybody; and I wants to get up and get out of this 'ere. Let's start directly. I'm all right now,

I can see you. Old Jane will soon make me ready."

And Pattie sat up in bed and looked round her.

"If the doctor gives permission you shall. Now lie down and I will call Jacob."

"Our Jacob, is he here and all? Well I never!"

Arthur went to the door; Jacob heard his voice from the next room and entered the close, sick chamber.

"Well now!" cried Pattie; "the sight of you two is a sight better than bottles full of medicine. I'll go back with you, I will."

They could hardly restrain her from at once rising to return with them to Broughton.

"I'll face it out! I will now, Mr. Arthur, though every one will call me a bad girl, I know. My father won't hit me, now I have been so sick; and Miss Gerrie—Miss Gerrie will love me always. Oh, I do want Miss Gerrie. Take me away from here, Jacob, do you hear?"

"Aye, lass, we will, only be quiet or you will make yourself worse, and will not be able to go."

But Pattie refused to lie down again. All her long, dark hair fell like a veil about her shoulders. She tried to gather it up, but it was too heavy for her ; her strength failed, and Arthur gently laid her back on the grimy pillows.

Exhausted she lay quite still, and one of the old women coming in, bade the young men retire.

“Where does the doctor live?” whispered Arthur.

The address was given, and they both hurried to his residence, even at that late hour, to ask his opinion on her instant removal. They found him in.

“Nothing can save her,” he said, “nothing. Her native country air might restore her a little for a short time, but the end cannot be far off. The journey might hasten it, indeed, might prove fatal ; but the fresh country air could not fail to be beneficial if only you dare undertake the risk. The distance is very great, more than a hundred miles, and the expense to take her, in the only way possible, would be a consideration, I suppose.”

“Not the least, only tell us how the journey could be accomplished to be least fatiguing.”

"On an air bed, in a second-class compartment, and by the express I should say; these consumptive cases are so deceitful, the excitement might kill her and might add a few weeks to her life. It seems a terrible pity; she has the sweetest face I have ever seen, and seems a good, innocent child."

There remained nothing more to do but to await the following morning, to see the state of the patient. It was with infinite surprise they found her up and dressed, anxiously expecting their arrival. She was sitting in an old black horse-hair arm-chair, propped up with pillows, and with Catherine Grey as her nurse.

"Take me away, take me away, Mr. Arthur," she said, "I'll not have another bite in London."

"Unless you take refreshment, I daren't take you," he answered gravely, gazing intently into that beautiful faded face with a breaking heart.

"You must do exactly as I tell you, Pattie; take the wine and the medicine, my child, *for my sake.*"

Pattie looked at him equally gravely.

“Yes, sir, I will, but you mustn’t fret, Mr. Arthur.”

Ah, the tender anxiety of those words!

Don’t fret! That brave young heart was past fretting!

He gave Pattie what was ordered, and she took it with sweet obedience. He then pressed his lips to the little emaciated hand, and, with Jacob, hastened to make all necessary arrangements for that trying journey. Pattie bore up most wonderfully; excitement sustaining her. Oh the joy to be with those dearest on earth, and in hope of once again resting those weary eyes on peaceful country scenes.

“Bring her straight home,” had been her father’s command. “I’ll not say a harsh word nor allow anybody else. She’s my own flesh and blood, and whatever she had done, I’d forgive her; the smell of t’ old farm-yard will do her more good nor anything in t’ world.” So they reached Lutterfield, accompanied by Sister Grey, whose garb of austerity was still more marked and her disguise more complete.

It was a still August evening ; an open carriage was procured, in which Pattie could still recline on her temporary bed ; and slowly they drove along the old familiar turnpike road, Arthur and Jacob walking within speaking distance of the poor invalid, whose life of pain was fast closing. Sorrow had taught her much, had drawn her nearer to God. While alone in London she had felt as if she had lost everything, and was as it were standing outside the earth altogether ; and the soreness of heart as the fancied victim of slander, the restlessness and languor of gradually declining health and of hopeless affections, poisoned her life at the fountain, and dried up the springs. Now, that suddenly everything seemed restored to her mental longings, her physical weakness, for she was in no pain, was almost forgotten. Hope revived her, love inspired her. What people would *say* now seemed of most minute insignificance. She had acted up to the light vouchsafed, had refused to lie, had refused to explain, or to betray another. So she had suffered, unavoidably. She now had absolutely lost all fear of anybody, even

her father, and never experienced a deeper repose, than during this solemn nearing to the old home of her childhood.

Actually homewards and heavenwards she was hurrying, yet without a thought of death.

As they entered the village, children's voices were hushed as they whispered to each other that poor Pattie Atkins they all remembered so well, was passing by in that fine carriage. Mothers stood at their open doors; rough men, lounging at the corners, touched their caps with respectful sympathy to the young master, who worked and lived among them, and who was ever seeking to do good, like Him he so often spoke about as he walked along so familiarly with Jacob Atkins. "He'd right the wrong, they knew; trust him for that," they said.

Arthur felt that his own earthly hopes were all shattered; but the sympathy always extended to him by these rough men, and the tender pity of Jessie and Gerrie, made his hard fate easier to bear; and God would still enable him to do something for Him—something towards benefiting others among whom he dwelt—and for

what he failed in here, would grant him final success hereafter.

His young face was calm but solemnised when they reached the farm gates, while Pattie's whole expression was of infinite thankfulness. Her father came forward and kissed her, the children gathered round as she was lifted on the bed from the carriage to the large spring sofa procured for the occasion from the Hall, and like an electric shock the news spread that lost Pattie Atkins had come home to die. The whole place was aroused to sorrow and curiosity; but there was very little news to be elicited.

Gerrie, of course, went in the cottage, and bore up bravely, though she sobbed with grief in her own room, and when her father was reading prayers, could not restrain her emotion.

The Squire seemed almost harsh, and more than indifferent to Pattie's fate. Gerrie had no sooner given a few particulars of the affecting scene, than he said he had heard enough, and did not want to be pestered about it.

Gerrie was almost ashamed of him; even sturdy young Vernon was more sympathising.

until Gerrie informed him that Sister Grey had brought poor Pattie home, when he immediately made use of some fierce invectives. And this made Gerrie wonder if that was also a reason for her father's displeasure. No one had keener insight or susceptibilities than had Gerrie Hoxton.

Reginald was annoyed and grieved at what he called Arthur's passion for doing what no one else would dream of. The idea of a young man of his standing, going from a wedding party on such an errand. It was preposterous and unbecoming. Arthur seemed to glory in breaking down all the network of social customs by which the rest of the world was kept in bounds.

But when, as a clergyman, Regie called at the cottage to see the sick girl, and offer up a prayer on her behalf, he bowed his stately head in deep reverence before a certain grim visitor he knew was at the door. Her life was ebbing like the snuff of a candle—one short hour flickering up bright, raising hopes of ultimate recovery, and the next she was lying all exhausted, her clear complexion changing from pale yellow to the ashen white of hastening dissolution.

Arthur came in and found him there, silently praying on his knees, while Pattie's eyes were closed with seeming unconsciousness on the scene.

Arthur did not kneel. All action seemed to him utterly useless. God knew the secret, unceasing cry of his heart, that his darling's evil days were all ending, and that joy unspeakable might be hers, till he joined her on the high mountain-tops of Eternity, where things here of no moment grow vaster and vaster, and the things now of grand importance shrink into nothingness.

Reginald rose and fixed his eyes sadly on his brother; then lovingly he stretched out a hand of true sympathy. This moved them both terribly. For the first time Arthur's strong chest heaved with suppressed sobs.

"Who's that?" said Pattie, softly, opening her eyes slowly. "Who's crying?"

"I am just going," replied Reginald; "you have had a short nap."

"Nay, I haven't, sir. I've heard all you said; but I'm short of breath. Is Mr. Arthur gone?"

"I'm here, child," he replied, mastering his terrible emotion.

"Tell Miss Gerrie that I couldn't abide that other—you know who—and I did as she telled me."

"As Miss Gerrie told you?" exclaimed Arthur, puzzled.

"Tell Mr. Regie I'll be at church on Sunday; and old Joe, he'll be ever so pleased. I'll sure to be there."

"Yes, yes."

"They must sing soft. They'll sing soft in heaven, like they do in the Abbey, won't they, Mr. Arthur? Oh, it were grand!"

He could not know to what she alluded; but he saw she was wandering to some past scene.

"All in white, all on 'em. 'Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us!' So soft; oh, so soft they sang."

Reginald quietly stole out of the warm atmosphere of the close little kitchen into the pleasant farm-yard. He felt pity inexpressible for his brother, infatuated it may be, but no less agonised for that; and, passing through the

side gate, walked up the lawn to the Hall. Gerrie saw him, and met him at the porch, struck by the sadness of his face.

“Have you seen dear Pattie? How is she?”

“Dying fast, poor child; but her death will be the crown of her life. There is really a touch of holy, unearthly beauty on her sweet face.”

They went into the library, redolent with delicious odours of garden flowers, in which Gerrie prided herself. Reginald spoke, too, with a caressing tenderness in his tones, with which no one on earth was familiar but Gerrie; for he never felt compelled, as less fortunate mortals do, to get the better of *his* infatuation. Gerrie and he were, he imagined, exactly suited and cut out for each other. She never looked at him without expressing or demanding sympathy; and, so far, they never took delight in tormenting each other. Only when Reginald expressed disaffection with Arthur's conduct or opinions did Gerrie ever venture to oppose him. For she was as staunch in her friendship for the one as in her unavowed attachment to the other, and in the main she agreed with Arthur in all his

Socialistic proclivities, as she had fostered them herself even from infancy. Nothing could make her feel her own importance so little as associating with the poor and less fortunate. With the higher classes of society, the *élite*, the cream of Lutterfield, she sometimes felt of almost gigantic dimensions; their aims, their ideals, their deeds seemed so puny. How insignificant were their griefs to those of the poor; how insipid their conversation on croquet, crewel work, tatting, etc., to the earnest talk of earnest workers.

Often had she seen faces of even natural ugliness transformed into a spiritual beauty almost inconceivable under the force of calamity heroically borne among the poor, the unlearned, the so-called uncultured.

Gerrie could not take pleasure in trivialities and frivolities from dawn to dark. She detested prim calls, and the useless, insipid remarks and inquiries concerning the weather, the last new fashion, flirtations, parties, which take up so much of the time of those in good society. She did not appreciate good society, perhaps,

as she ought to do, only she truly loved her friends.

Gerrie was by no means melancholy by nature. She delighted in a good joke, and loved true laughter. But she was never in an ecstasy of fun at the expense of others. The young ladies of the neighbourhood had many a joke upon Jessie and her plebeian tastes, their dreary pleasures, as they called them. But Regie loved them for the very things they did, which set his own fastidious teeth on edge if he attempted them himself.

The solemn scene he had just witnessed in the cottage left its impression on his statuesque countenance. Gerrie fetched him a glass of wine; but he declined it—he had become a total abstainer.

“I cannot give the people what you and Arthur can, my little friend; but I can sacrifice something to set them a good example.”

Regie had no desire to be seduced by love of ease or appetite. He also aspired to do noble and true things, and this abstaining from

all alcoholic drinks he had lately been led to consider a most important step in the right direction.

Arthur had been heard by Gerrie to call this new system, if not exactly a craze, rather near it—a new commandment entirely out of keeping with the teaching and actual example of the Founder of our religion and morals. Surely it is only modern Christianity that at last begins to question the advisability of following the example of that Holy Life.

“I don’t believe in it, Regie, indeed I don’t. I don’t believe your example will make a single drunkard sober. And when you have made yourself quite ill with abstinence, the doctor will order you wine, and you will be compelled to take the demon. Then, when you are better, you will sign the pledge again, I suppose, and talk against your remedy. That is most unfair. And to many people wine or beer is almost necessary.”

Gerrie had often been to temperance lectures, and had heard one temperance sermon which had roused her indignation immensely.

The preacher had taken for his text (for they

must generally be rather hard up for texts), the last chapter of Proverbs, and the fourth and fifth verses.

Gerrie, being a rapid reader, continued reading the following verses before the preacher had droned through his two, and she felt almost inclined to exclaim: "Please go on." The two texts chosen run thus: "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink, lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted"—but he ought to have continued the subject: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more."

But to a teetotaler these must be two very shocking texts, though Gerrie agreed with all four, the two chosen, and the two unacknowledged, and felt very angry that the latter were thus ignored by one who declared that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

"No intelligent person calls drink a demon taken in moderation; but there are so many to

whom moderation is impossible, and for their sakes we abstain," urged Reginald.

"For the sake of immoderation in those who cannot control themselves, you give them a remedy by helping them to be immoderate in another direction, for you know, dear Regie, the language one hears at so-called temperance lectures is downright abuse very often, and always *immoderate*."

"You have learnt Arthur's lessons very well, Gerrie," replied Regie, slightly pained.

"Do you mean that it is wrong to give poor, dear Pattie the whisky and milk that the doctor has ordered for her?"

"Of course not. Such things may be taken as a medicine, but not as a beverage."

"But the total abstainers won't admit even its medicinal use. There is Mrs. Howe, who seems to consider the only sin worth remembering in her long life, was that of allowing a drop of intoxicating liquor to pass her lips once, when almost sick to death."

"She is a self-righteous old specimen——"

"Besides, Regie, you don't mean to say that

as long as we have something to drink it is really any self-sacrifice at all to abstain from wine. We surely do not love meat or drink. It would be a real sacrifice for Arthur to leave Pattie in London. It would be hard for you to—to——”

“Give up your friendship, eh, Gerrie?”

“But then there is no need. But I meant something else.”

“What did you mean?”

“For you to live and do as Arthur does. To come into hourly contact with coarse men and things.”

“But then, to use your own words, there is no need. Would you like me to do so?”

“I would like you to be *able* to do anything—anything,” said Gerrie, with her bright, grey eyes all aglow. “I would like nothing to be too hard for you.”

“Little Stoic! You would make a Spartan mother.”

“I would rather make a Christian martyr. Pattie is a martyr.”

“How so?”

“A martyr to her love of truth. A rich man

would have made her his wife ; but as she could not love him, she sacrificed everything, rather than tell a lie, which she considered she should have done if she had married him, caring more for another all the time."

"Who was it?"

"I can't imagine," replied Gerrie, thoughtfully ; "and the faithful darling will not tell even me, because, I suppose, she has promised not to do so, or thinks it her duty. Oh my brave, beautiful Pattie! And she is a common girl, Regie—a common girl, Laura thinks—but *I* don't."

"Taken in your sense of the word, she is certainly not common; but taken in the sense Laura means, she is so still, in spite of noble qualities."

"Regie! I wish you were not so proud."

"There is a proper pride, Gerrie, that I cannot forego."

"The proper pride you speak of, Christ lived and died to stamp out of the world, and yet how Christians foster it. How they love to receive honour from men, to be saluted and treated with personal respect. Don't they now?"

“My dear little Gerrie, you have grand ideals, and hold them with much tenacity. But you and I must not quarrel over our disagreements.”

“We should, Regie, if our ideals were not one and the same. I—oh, I could not have a real friend who did not agree with me in that.”

“But, Gerrie, we do agree in that—in our love and reverence for our one perfect Friend and Master—even if we understand His words somewhat differently. Believe me that it is your religion, so real and fervent, that cements our friendship, dear child; but as yet you are so ignorant of the world, and have had such a very exceptional tutor, in my peculiar brother, that we cannot expect to think the same in everything.”

Gerrie wisely turned the subject, but she continued to hold firmly her own convictions.

CHAPTER XI.

ARTHUR crept home to sleep ; but avoided coming into any contact with members of his own family. He was passing through a terrible mental crisis, and could brook no interference.

The Rector and his wife did not attempt to penetrate into the interior working of the minds of their children. Outward circumspection of conduct was expected from them, and when they overstepped the rules of conventionality, it jarred upon the susceptibilities of this gradually prosaic-growing couple.

They would most decidedly have objected had they known how Arthur spent most of the day at the farm cottage. It was purposely kept from them. Reginald being at home, there was no necessity for the old gentleman to visit the sick members of his parish, and that was a great relief

to the fastidious, delicate student. He felt no delight in administering to the necessities of others out of the pulpit. Personal contact with dirt, disease, poverty or death, was more than distasteful, it was horrible. And Reginald, though taking upon himself the same office and profession, felt exactly the same repulsion to such scenes; but his religion had more enthusiasm about it than his father's. Perhaps his had all died out. Reginald's desire was to overcome his repugnance to the painful duties of his calling, and, however obnoxious, to persist in their performance. Thus upon him it fell, during his short holiday, to spend some time in each day in visiting the sick and suffering. He knew all about Arthur, and without being asked, was silent. It could not, at any rate, last long, and then people loved his brother so much, they need fear no scandal. His occasional presence at the cottage would, if anything, give countenance to Arthur in the eyes of others.

On the third day, Pattie seemed much revived, and she actually sat up in an old arm-chair, propped up with pillows, to take a cup of tea with her friends. There was her grandmother, who had

overturned her resolution never to enter the house again, there was old Rachel Rawson, too, and Mrs. May, all come down from the common together to see the "poor lass," as they expressed themselves.

Arthur, delighted at the improvement, left the cottage for the Hall, until the company had made themselves scarce, which poor Pattie earnestly wished they would do. They all bewildered her with their cross questions, except Mrs. May, who tried in vain to make out at what they were driving. Finally, she came to the conclusion that *she* was one too many. After sipping her tea and trying to eat, which was very ineffectual, for the sight of that dying girl, of whom she had such fears of Reuben thinking too much about, almost choked her :

"It seems but a short time sin' you came in our house that afternoon, looking just like a wild red rose, all your cheeks a-glowing with running through th' wood."

"Don't it?" said Pattie, feeling quite old in the remembrance of all that had transpired since that day, and longing to say more than she ought.

It was this enforced reticence, as much as anything else, that was eating into her heart and sapping her life.

“Why, Pattie, you must ’a known then——!”

But here Mrs. Rawson tugged the good woman’s dress, and Mrs. May repented her allusion.

“I’d like to see Reuben,” said Pattie, in a very low voice, wondering if he thought she was a wicked girl. The very idea that any she esteemed thought so still was agony.

With motherly pride in her son, and sympathy for the poor, misguided girl, Mrs. May promised to send the lad down.

Atkins now came in and drank a cup of tea, and the two elderly women were very careful of their manners and their words before so great a man. He accepted their respectful demeanour as due to his position, was very silent, and spoke not a word to his still more silent partner, who, after clearing away the tea-things, said she would give the other children their tea in the back yard, under the old cherry-tree.

Presently Pattie was alone with the old women, and she seemed eager to hear and speak.

"All we did was for your good, lass—for your good," said her grandmother; "though he were al'ays that civil and ginerous—ready to put his hand in his pocket any time. What became o' t' ring, Pattie?"

"Sister Grey gave it him back."

"He's far away now; but if he knowed as how you were bad at home again, whativer would he say?"

"I hope I'll be dead afore he does," said Pattie. "I never want to see him again; I couldn't abide him."

"But you would 'a done. There, I never meant to call yer—— I suppose it's that Mr. Arthur that set you again him? He's been th' ruin on yer."

Pattie's face turned rigid, and her breath came in hurried gasps. The two cronies were terrified, and, calling to the step-mother, she came just in time to save the girl from going into a deadly swoon, from which she would scarcely have been likely ever to recover.

Pattie was laid on the sofa again, and vine-

gar-cloths applied to her forehead, with Miss Gerrie's smelling-salts to inhale.

"You two have been too much for her. Old folk talk too fast," said the younger woman, purposely.

"Then we'd better be going," they replied, frightened and grieved.

"So I should say," she returned; "and good riddance!" she muttered.

On entering the shrubbery, Arthur saw in the distance the figure of the Squire, and with him a lady, who was sitting on a garden-seat, and held over her head a sunshade, either for protection from the sunset, or for concealment. Arthur was no stranger to the Squire's character, and, had it not been for the mutual affection for Gerrie, would strongly have objected to Jessie being so much at the Hall. With some misgivings, he had the impertinence to proceed to the same spot, not with the intention of eavesdropping, but to assure himself that it was not Jessie in that position. He did not relish any private interviews between his

sister and Squire Hoxton. He was much relieved to hear a familiar voice say :

“I shall do my duty, and have no mercy.”

It was the lady who spoke.

“As you like. Have I asked any?”

“I beg pardon,” cried Arthur, “but I have taken the liberty to enter the side gate from the cottage. I hoped to find either my sister or your daughter here.”

It was none other than Sister Catherine who was speaking, in almost threatening terms, to the Squire. His face wore an expression of suppressed rage ; his usual nonchalant demeanour was regained with difficulty.

“I want to worm out of Sister Kate all the particulars concerning my gardener’s pretty daughter ; but she is as firm as a vice. I hate anything mysterious, especially about any of my belongings, and I claim poor Pattie Atkins as, in some measure, dependent upon me.”

Sister Kate arose. Her face was expressive of passionate distress and obstinate determination, without the slightest mixture of tenderness or sadness. How could any allusion to that dying girl

affect her in such a way was a greater mystery still.

"Remember my words," she said, looking at the evidently enraged Squire with intense determination.

"Hang your words! Say what you please, and go to the devil. Pardon me, young sir, but these subordinate females are unmanageable."

Arthur was sorely perplexed that such a scene should have transpired in his presence. He was not a bit surprised that there were some secrets between this woman, who had inhabited the Hall so many years, and that somewhat imperious, despotic, fascinating master, whose various intrigues years ago had afforded gossip for the neighbourhood; but that Pattie's name should be brought in to their private affairs seemed intolerable.

Could the Squire have been the gentleman who really wanted to marry Pattie, and whom "she could not abide"? He had certainly been in town during the time she had been absent. But surely not; besides, Pattie mentioned him always as "dear Miss Gerrie's pa," and had never

expressed the slightest repugnance towards him. No; he put that idea away the same moment it betrayed itself. If not he, who on earth was the brute who had not had the courage to save her from a prisoner's cell? A dark thought flashed across his mind; he crushed it out.

The Squire was much annoyed, and tried in vain to give attention to his companion.

"All women-folks are inscrutable," he said. "When you think you have found a demure, submissive, clinging specimen, that one might imagine an angel incarnate, she invariably turns out a very demon in temper, spite, jealousy, and all other evil attributes. Keep clear of them all, Arthur, my boy."

Poor Arthur! His short experience had been very different. He made no reply; he had no inclination to abuse the opposite sex, and could not penetrate the Squire's motives.

"Come, we will find Gerrie pottering about somewhere indoors or out in garden or hall," exclaimed her father. And he proceeded directly to the porch, followed by Arthur, who sincerely wished himself elsewhere.

Gerrie was already presiding at the tea-table, in a sweet, pretty, pale pink gown, her light chestnut hair falling in natural curls on a long, thin neck, and beautifully sloping shoulders. She was now fairly tall, and not at all inclined to embonpoint, being of too sensitive and anxious a nature. Under happier circumstances she might have had exuberant spirits, for she had the keenest sense of the ridiculous; but not only her own, but the sad lives of all those surrounding her, tended to make her grave beyond her years.

She was now full of tender inquiries concerning Pattie. She knew intuitively how dear the dying girl was to the young man before her, and agreed with Jessie that perhaps it was all for the best that death came early to part those whose union would have perhaps been even more bitter in years to come. But it grieved Gerrie to imagine what he suffered so bravely and patiently, and added to the idea she had formed of his heroic character.

Vernon was in an excitable mood. He had had a glimpse of Sister Grey, and she had wanted to kiss him. "I wasn't going to let her, though,"

he said, triumphantly. "She shouldn't wear such togs—ugly things, she's another bloody Queen Mary; but I isn't going to be martyred. I say, papa, what do you think?"

"As if I should tell *you* what I think——"

"But I mean what Jones says!"

"Well, what does Jones say?"

"Oh, I forgot; he said I wasn't to tell. It don't matter."

"Then don't tell."

"Papa, have you found me a school yet? I'm too big for girls to teach, ain't I?" appealing to Arthur.

"Would you like the birch, young man?"

"I could stand it. I aren't afraid of anything. I don't mind hurting myself a bit. You ask Jim——"

The Squire looked at him curiously, *not* affectionately.

"You wasn't afraid, was you, pa?"

"It would have been better for me if I had been," replied the Squire, somewhat bitterly.

"*You* always took precious good care not to get hurt, didn't you, Gerrie? When you get a

hit at hockey, off you go because you are a girl. That's it," apologetically.

For, if Vernon loved anybody, it was Gerrie.

"I dare say I did, dear," said Gerrie, quietly. "But have you found a school for Vernon, father? Jessie cannot help us any more now Laura is gone."

"In another week I will tell you definitely," replied her father. "Young folks are always so impatient."

But it was *he* who was most impatient now. He could scarcely suppress his agitation. He felt on the eve of some great tragedy, or of the consummation of frantic longings. He had been too near the fire and become frightfully singed. Images and arguments innumerable alternated for and against a long premeditated act, of which no one present had the slightest clue. He had determined, then hesitated, then resolved, then renounced the idea of demanding Jessie as his wife, every hour of the day for months past. Now the culminating point had arrived, and he must decide. The impulse to yield to his natural heart rushed upon him like a torrent. And he must act at

once, another day might be too late. Qualms of conscience had hitherto never besieged his soul like a storm. To attain his object had been ever his deliberate intention at whatever cost. But for the first time he feared to injure the object desired. For the first time he gave some consideration to another than self. It was a bewildering, irksome sensation. But as he sat so absorbed, sipping his tea, and striving to appear unconcerned, another was hastening to crush his hopes.

"Arthur, are you going home early this evening?"

"I was not thinking of doing so," he replied, sincerely, for he was long past any bashfulness about his assiduous attentions upon poor Pattie.

"Going down the mine to-morrow?" asked the Squire.

"I ought. Why should I claim greater indulgences than my fellow-men?"

"Because *you* can get them, and they can't. A palpable fact, and a very good unanswerable reply."

"Poor old Joe Bannington lost his only son

last year. He was in an agony of grief; but could not take a day's holiday to pass by his boy's dying bedside."

"Why not?"

"Because he was told he could not be spared. You know he is a gaffer."

"Of course a man must take the consequences of so important a post as that," laughed the Squire.

"And are you a gaffer?"

"I ought, at any rate, to go and see if I am required; and shall do so to-morrow. Gerrie! tell them not to expect me early at home, and I shall be off before any one is up. Give my love to Jessie. Strange! I have not once seen her since my return. She was with Pattie this morning, and I happened to be at Lutterfield. I had heard of chlorodyne being a remarkable relief for the chest, and went to buy a bottle. Excuse me now, Squire. Ta, ta, Vernie; bravely look forward to the birch; and, Gerrie, please remember my message to the dearest of sisters."

Remember it, indeed! While life lasted that message was never forgotten by the giver or receiver.

Arthur returned to his vigil with Pattie, who had recovered from the overpowering effects of her late visitors. How the poor girl's face brightened as he entered, looking at her with such wonderful tenderness and compassion, yet such awful pathos. Her heart did not palpitate now as he approached her. She had lost all fear, all timidity, and accepted his devotion as calmly as she rendered to him all her highest love and reverence. It seemed like heaven to have him sitting near her, so naturally, that, in his presence, she banished thoughts of death. She liked to be dying, as it brought him nearer; and she knew tacitly that it was that very fact that made this joy possible. In such a case it would not be hard to die; with his dear face close by, and his kind hand holding hers, she would gladly pass from death to life.

They spoke very little that evening. She was somewhat exhausted with her effort to entertain her old friends. She need make no such effort for him. Enough that they were near each other.

“Where have you been?” she whispered.

"To the Hall—to Miss Gerrie," he replied.

"You love Miss Gerrie—eh?"

"My heart has only room for one love now, Pattie."

"But when I've been gone a long time, then you'll have Miss Gerrie. She'll none be vexed with you for thinking too much of poor Pattie. Won't you now?"

"Don't! don't!" was his only answer, and that was wrung from him by her beseeching tone.

"If you fret so, I can't ever die, Mr. Arthur, and I am so, so tired. Kiss me."

There was no one in the room but these two. He pressed his lips on hers, and then drew back. She heard him sob.

"Him I couldn't abide, took me to t' Abbey, I shall never forget it. But you and me will walk together up to th' Great White Throne, Mr. Arthur, and it'll be you as brought me. That'll be better than the Abbey, eh?"

"Yes, dear Pattie, God grant it."

"I never once thought of him by my side, when I was in th' Abbey; but I shan't forget you,

Mr. Arthur, not even *there*. But I'd like once more to hear 'em sing again, so soft : 'Lord have mercy upon us,' you know."

She closed her eyes ; her lips moved as if trying herself to murmur those sweet strains, but no sound escaped her lips.

He sat quite still, and tried to imagine his sweet, simple Pattie, in that grand, magnificent building. Surely she had expressed plainly how the scene had affected her ; but he could not picture her in all the grand paraphernalia with which she had tried to depict herself to him in telling him, nor did he again inquire of her who was her companion.

It was nearly midnight. The children were all in bed. The step-mother was now trying hard to do her duty to the dying girl, to compensate for past harshness, and was to be her watcher for the night.

Jacob was fast asleep in the chair. Arthur, seeing that Pattie was wide awake, took her poor emaciated little hand, and pressed it to his lips.

"Who would have thought my foul hands could ever have grown so white? Why, Mr.

Arthur, they are as delicate as Miss Gerrie's now, eh?"

And she held up the hand he had kissed, and gazed upon the blue veins and the thin fingers for a moment. The next, she kissed the place that he had kissed, and heavy tears blinded the fast dying eyes.

"Good night, dear Pattie," whispered the young man, feeling his own heart overwhelmed with the sense of his fast approaching bereavement. He could have sobbed aloud, but he spared her.

"Good night, Mr. Arthur; perhaps I shall waken up in a grander place than the Abbey, and you'll come, too, before long. How I shall look out for you in the beautiful city. No, you won't be long after me; so don't you fret, sir."

He could not answer. He bent down and kissed the cold brow, upon which the dews of death were already gathering, and passed out almost heartbroken into the darkness.

CHAPTER XII.

It was tea-time at the Rectory. There was no merry party sitting at the long table. Mrs. Jewel had a thoroughly washed-out appearance, without the slightest attempt at beautifying her person. Such attempts would have been inconsistent with her religious views; indeed, any alleviations of the evils that fall upon the human race were incompatible with St. Paul's injunction to "bear all things, endure all things." One marvels how such people consult physicians, except as a means of lengthening their sufferings.

To adopt the custom of attire in vogue is always considered worldly by a certain class of people; but as soon as the rest of mankind discards such style of garment, these religious people at once assume the same. Human nature is unaccountable, even at its highest. But there

sat Mrs. Jewel at the head of the table, with the tea-tray before her, and its usual accompaniments. She not only looked washed out, but worn out, tired out. Her deepest affections were centred on the hapless son who sat on her left, quite unconscious of his own misfortunes, or the effect they had upon his mother. She firmly believed that, in the next life, Dick would have compensation over his handsome, intelligent brothers. The poor mother watched him with deepest anxiety when in his father's presence, fearful lest he should do or say anything to outrage that inestimable gentleman's fastidiousness.

Opposite his mother sat Reginald, calm and beautiful in face, spotless in attire, but this evening more silent than usual. To his right sat the father, that his eyes might not be pained by the peculiar habits, nor his ears catch the half-whispered, irritating remarks, of his first-born. Dick, too, preferred this arrangement. He liked rather to look at Jessie, who sat on the right of her mother, and who never appeared to notice or reprimand what he frequently did, partially, if

not wholly, conscious that such acts were incongruous and naughty. The slightest fault-finding now produced a scene, and, of all things, such scenes must be avoided.

It was not a terrible trial to Reginald, the presence of this hopeless, afflicted brother ; but occasionally Dr. Jewel had hinted that it would be better to keep him in some kind of seclusion, with an attendant. But nothing roused Mrs. Jewel to such excitement as to breathe a word in disparagement of this darling son, for in his affections she stood, and would for ever stand, first. The Doctor admired Reginald, but never had, and never could be, on familiar terms with him.

As a boy he had been proud and reserved, and as a man he was even more so. Of course, Reginald was unconscious of his father's thoughts respecting him, yet he felt terribly the want of sympathy between them. Jessie admired her brother Reginald, but neither could she quite enter his heart. Arthur was dearer to her, and Regie accepted that fact tacitly, without jealousy. For who could help loving Arthur ? Next to

Gerrie, there was no one on earth equal to him. Any fault he possessed was but virtue exaggerated; and his candid, open manners, his genial laugh, his unconventionality, seemed to compel every one in his presence at least to be true. Dr. Jewel relaxed when alone with his second son, and opened out more of his mind to him than even to his wife. It was a terrible trial to feel that this son was never secure from peril down the awful mines; that when the bright sunshine lit up the room in which he sat, Arthur was still in darkness; that when an accident of falling coal buried or disabled some wretched man, his fine, handsome, self-sacrificing boy was voluntarily subjecting himself to the same fate.

This was a trouble that affected them all, only Jessie's hero-worship forced back her tears, or any other words of regret or expostulation. Arthur had a decided bent; but that was not earthly ambition. He had not undertaken such dangerous occupation for a freak or caprice, but in the hope of assisting others to find methods of lessening those dangers, and doing good to the mining

world. If he differed from others, the difference was only in his greater nobility of character, and his willingness to lay down his life for his friends. It was not that he enjoyed this vicarious life, it was not that his tastes were low and unrefined, that he consented to spend and be spent in the service of the "common people." No; Jessie knew him better than that, and so did Reginald; and even his parents, though occasionally in despair they charged him with such offences, knew perfectly well that it was not so. No one loved what was beautiful, good, and true, more than Arthur; no one deplored the ill-manners, the coarseness, the occasional brutality of his daily companions more than he; perhaps no one really shrank more from personal contact with vulgarity; but he was strong to suffer, and determined to tread bravely the thorny road that might eventually tend to bring his fellow-men more light into their lives. If Christ is the Light of the World, Christians should carry His lantern into the darkest corners of the earth fearlessly and perseveringly. What else has a Christian so much worth living for?

In associating with his inferiors, he had not one ignoble purpose.

But to return to our tea-party. The cups had all been passed up for a second edition, when the door opened and a servant announced that Sister Grey would be glad to speak with Miss Jessie.

"Take her in the drawing-room, I will be with her directly," said Jessie. And then turning to her mother, she said, gently, "It is something about poor Pattie."

The Rector heard, however.

"Poor child! I remember asking her to attend the confirmation class, but could not prevail upon her to do so; I dare say now she regrets that she did not, only these kind of people have no idea of the spiritual benefit of such rites. We will hope that their ignorance will be considered at the final judgment. They that know not, will be beaten with few stripes."

"With no stripes at all," hoped Jessie; but she made no observation aloud. Hurrying over that second cup, she asked to be excused from the table.

She rather liked Sister Grey, but not sufficiently to kiss her; besides, no one knew where she came from, or anything of her antecedents. She met her with much friendliness, however, anticipating revelations concerning poor Pattie's mysterious visit to London.

"It is not of Pattie I wish to speak to you, but of myself. I'm terribly in need of a friend."

"I am sure Gerrie is your friend," said Jessie.

"As far as she is capable, I doubt it not; but there are certain matters it would be worse than useless to confide in her. Could we be quite alone, Miss Jewel?"

"Oh, certainly. Come upstairs to my bedroom; there we shall be in no danger of interruption."

It was a pleasant room, looking far out to distant grey hills, over which the sun was gradually declining in power, though exceeding in brilliance. The furniture was old-fashioned, with a large four-poster bedstead, upholstered in white dimity, and lined with pink. There was nothing cold or bare about the room.

"Sit down there, dear," said Jessie, preparing for confidences.

"You will never repeat what I say?" began Sister Grey.

"Don't bind me to anything. There are occasions when to keep a promise incurs so much worse consequences than plain speaking; but, of course, I will keep quite secret anything that affects you only."

She was thinking of the cruel silence that allowed Pattie to be suspected when, perhaps, perfectly innocent of wrong.

"You love Gerrie," said Sister Grey, earnestly, and speaking with bated breath, "and Gerrie's father!"

A rush of blood to head, face, and neck of her listener made Sister Grey continue very reluctantly:

"I am very sorry, dear Miss Jessie; he is not worthy the love of any sweet, innocent girl, and it is right you should be undeceived. I *will* speak; yes, I *will*! This morning I have been trying to make him see the wickedness of his own conduct; but he is mad with passion, and

is determined to risk all—to defy me and my miserable claims on him.”

“Your claims?”

“Yes, mine—humble, dependent as I am on other people. If I were not a beggar in pocket, I would be a duchess in spirit, Miss Jewel.”

“What can it be to you what Gerrie’s father does?”

“Miss Jewel, will you let me tell you my story? I am a Lutterfield girl, and niece to old Mrs. Rawson. I never knew Broughton in early life. My father was a farm bailiff, and I was pupil-teacher at Kanley, two miles the other side of Lutterfield—you will know the place. There’s a fine trout-stream there, where gentlemen used to fish for days together. Squire Hoxton was one, and he used to be fishing for some purpose, always meeting me as I went backwards and forwards to school. At first he did not speak, but was always close to the path as I went by, instead of by the edge of the water. I knew he was admiring me, and no one could see a fine gentleman like him gazing at one with perfect indifference. The first season I noticed him he

did not once address me; but the next summer he was there about the same time of the year, and when we met, his face beamed all over with smiles, and he took off his hat with as much courtesy as if I had been the first lady in the land. It made my heart beat strangely. I little thought I should live to curse the day I saw that handsome face."

Jessie sat with her white hands clasping her knees; but it was impossible for the narrator to imagine with what emotion, if any, she listened to this recital. She looked very pale, but perfectly calm.

"Go on, dear!" she said, quietly, as Sister Grey paused.

"He gave me a wrong name, calling himself John Philips, confessed he was rich, and seemed madly in love with me. My father was an ignorant, good-natured man, and I was the apple of his eye. He would have sacrificed all his belongings, and they weren't many, to gratify me, and my mother let me bring him to the house, and was proud to have so fine a gentleman for her son-in-law.

“When it was time for me to go to the Training College at York, he lent my mother money to defray all the expenses, and came to see me there, and took me to the Minster and lots of places of interest.”

Here Sister Grey became moved with the remembrance of bygone days, and rocked herself backwards and forwards in evident agony of mind.

“He would speak of marriage, and declared he could not wait till I had passed my time. Before the end of the first year he persuaded me to remove from College, and take a situation as nursery governess to some grand lady friend of his near London. The house was very lonely, in the middle of a great park. There were a great many children, and he knew well enough how to make me miserable enough to consent to anything. The gentleman of the house was an amateur in everything chemical or artistic, and was nearly always at home. He and his wife did not care for each other, as it seems few of the married gentlefolks do; so, to pass the time away, he began complimenting *me* whenever he had the chance.

I believe now that the Squire set him on to drive me to extremity. I was awfully unhappy, and wrote to him that I should go back home. Soon after he came to see me, and was so kind that I thought that if I could only be his servant, I would, rather than do anything else. Ah, what poor creatures we women are! He persuaded me to be married on the sly. He took me to London. At first he suggested that we could do well enough without going to church, for that people who lived together, and chose each other before all others, were married in the sight of God, and that such marriages were legal in Scotland. But something in me would not let me listen to him. I vowed I would be his wife or go back home. He said I was too obstinate ever to be a happy woman, and downright horrified me, even then, by declaring that marriage only made men and women hate each other, by forging unnatural chains of bondage. But I gained the day, so I thought. The banns were asked in some big church, and one morning early, he and I walked up the dark church aisle and were made one. Then I was satisfied, though he shortly after left

me and I scarcely ever heard or saw him for months. Being his wife gave me a feeling of security in him, for his love never seemed to cool when with me, and I worshipped him in my madness."

Here Sister Grey got up and walked about, violently agitated.

"He's the devil himself, Miss Jessie, the devil himself."

"Hush, hush! don't get so excited, dear. Go on——"

"Well, Miss Jewel, this went on for a year and more. I was in comfortable apartments in Brixton, which I preferred to a house, as he was of seeming necessity obliged to be absent so much. And, oh, fool that I was, I believed every word he said. But I found that I was about to be a mother, and when he knew it, he seemed delighted too. But he did not always seem happy, and because he told me so little about himself, I grew uneasy. I wanted to go home; but he refused to allow me to do so. He said my mother might come and nurse me, and so she did, with Aunt Rawson. Never shall I forget what a

passion he was in when he heard as how Aunt Rawson had come—he flung himself out of the house, and vowed he would come no more till she was safe back in her own country. So she had to go back the very next day; and I don't wonder why now. She would have known him at once. My child was a little girl, such a sweet, delicate little creature; but it only lived long enough to twine itself round my heart for ever and ever. How I loved that infant! But the fright he put me into by his passion against Aunt Rawson seemed to have injured it, for the little darling never throve. She gradually pined away from her birth. When Philip came to see me again, she was in a dying condition. He seemed downright unfeeling about it, and, if anything, glad. There were too many girls in the world, he said. Little I imagined that he had already one such too many. Still, he made up for my loss by kindness; for the little angel went home, and they laid it far away underground in some vast London cemetery. If it had not been for his tenderness then, I should have died. Two years after I presented him

with a son. He had been long estranged from me. It was a proud moment when I saw him carry my boy to the window and examine it with real affection. And that was the very last happiness I can know. The next day he began to throw out hints about taking this child away from me; but, having lost my first, this boy seemed doubly precious. I cried, and pleaded, and vowed I would do anything rather than part from my baby. He grew very angry sometimes; but nothing he could say or do could frighten me into consent to his wish.

“‘Then,’ he said, in a great rage, ‘I shall have to tell you something that will spoil all your life.’

“He never spoke truer words. But never surmising the truth, I defied him to tell me anything half so awful as would be separation from the boy.

“He told me first that he was a criminal, and I fancied he was, perhaps, a ticket-of-leave man, though he was so well off and so fine a gentleman.

“‘I am a criminal,’ he said, ‘but have never

been found out, because I am not a fool as well ; and what is more, I do not intend to be. Before I would be detected, I would be a greater criminal ;' and he looked as if he meant it.

"You've only seen the best side of him, Miss Jessie ; I know the very worst. By degrees he confessed his guilt, confessed that he was already a married man ; that our marriage was a mere farce, he having given a fictitious name, and that no law could touch him, for he was prepared to deny flatly that he had ever seen me before. Though how he could have done that I don't know ; for I never have tried to prove it. You believe that I am speaking out the truth, don't you ?"

"Certainly. I believe every word you say."

"The Squire hid nothing from me, and made no attempt to deceive me further. He had committed bigamy if it could only be brought home to him. But I still loved him, and though I made myself ill with fretting, I had no desire to punish him. What won't a woman endure for the man she loves, who she believes at heart loves her ? I was too selfish in my sorrow to give a thought

to his deceived wife, for whom he expressed positive detestation ; it even comforted me to feel he hated her. After opening his mind freely, he seemed to care for me more than ever, and vowed he could not live without me and the boy. I promised to carry out all his wishes, at the same time believing his solemn protestations to make me his wife, if ever he was free. It was a wicked bargain, you will think, but what else could I do, for I was quite dependent on him for daily food ?

“He next pointed out the only way in which we could be together. He would force his poor, weakly wife to consent to adopt my son as her own, and I should be its nurse, but I was compelled to put on this disguise,” she cried, hurling from her the detested headgear, “and to conceal my attachment to the boy, and to keep at a respectful distance from my lord and master. And oh, Miss Jessie, he kept me cruelly to these terms. He would pass me in the house without the slightest recognition ; he would go days and weeks without offering me a kind word in my desolation, and my heart changed to him. I learnt to hate him, and the boy too, almost. Miss Gerrie won my

heart at once, I would think my buried darling would have grown up such a one. When his wife was dying, and, believe me, I only felt sorrow and pity for the dear lady, who was quite as disappointed and unhappy as myself, I did once ask him if he meant to fulfil his promise to me. He turned it off then, and bade me wait. I was a little ashamed of my haste; but I still loved him, and for five years had lived in the house with him as a stranger, though my heart was wearing away with bitterness. Oh, Miss Jessie, what I have suffered, God only knows. But when his wife had been in her grave some months, I appeared before him again, and renewed my entreaties for the sake of the past. He was in a terrible passion. He would keep me still as I was, but never as his wife; he would rather hang himself. I fell on my knees—he seemed to lose all self-control, and spurned me from him. I saw that his heart had turned against me, that I had no more power to turn him than a whiff of human breath to turn a windmill, so I made up my mind to leave him, threatening to take my son. But the boy never cared for me. My hateful

dress he could never bear, and he inherits his father's hard heart. He wanted the boy to inherit what he said would have gone from Gerrie, so I left him. Perhaps it was better for him, perhaps not—God knows. I know nothing, nothing; I only wish I was dead."

"Poor dear! But why tell *me* all this?" said Jessie.

"Because—because, Miss Jessie, you are unmarried. He would marry you to-morrow, and I believe he loves you better than he has ever loved yet. But I was determined you should not be deceived as I had been. My claim upon him is not legal, I am told, only moral."

"Do you love him still?" Jessie whispered.

The woman did not reply at once. She was endeavouring to analyse her own feelings.

"If I could have him back, mine entirely, the father of my boy, the lover of my girlhood, then I could love him. But that could never, never be—he hates me; I believe he shudders when I approach him, as if I were an adder."

"Then you could not be happy with him."

"No, never, never more, nor he with me."

"The vice and shame is his much more than yours. Try to look up and trust in God. He is the helper of the desolate. If the Squire believed in God, he dare not act so?"

"What would you advise, Miss Jewel? How can I quite renounce my own child? What is to become of me?"

"Is your mother still living?"

"No, nor father. I am alone in the world. When I am in town I am forewoman of a shop in Edgware Road."

"If you will return there, probably——"

"No, I have lost that situation through my absence."

"The Squire ought to provide for you, indeed he ought."

"So he would; but I hate to receive anything from him now."

"Now, dear Sister Grey, pray put from your mind for ever, that I am going to marry the Squire. What can put such an idea in your head?"

"Because I can read him like an open book. I could swear that that is his intention."

Jessie rose up with lips firmly pressed together, indicative of determined resolutions passing through her mind. She could not prevent the natural effects of mental agitation revealing themselves, a nervous trembling in her hands as she smoothed her hair at the glass, or the almost ghastly white of complexion and lips; but her manner was both quiet and collected, and her voice neither husky nor tremulous.

"You shall never repent having confided in me," she said to the unhappy creature, who also commenced readjusting her disguise, "and if there is ever anything I can do for you, you may command me. I am your firm friend, and whenever I bestow my friendship, I love to give unmistakable tokens of its reality; so trust in me."

Sister Grey caught her hand and kissed it; but Jessie stooped down her grave, beautiful face, and pressed her lips to her forehead.

END OF VOL. II.

